

## VITA

Jennifer Lynn Baker Sipes

### EDUCATION

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| 2010 | Indiana State University, Terre Haute, Indiana<br>Doctor of Philosophy, Higher Education Leadership                             |
| 2004 | Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, Illinois<br>Master of Science, College Student Affairs                                 |
| 2000 | Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, Illinois<br>Bachelor of Arts, Foreign Languages<br>Bachelor of Science, Health Studies |

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| 2008 – Present | Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, Illinois<br>Interim Special Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs |
| 2006           | Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, Illinois<br>Academic Advisor, Office of Minority Affairs                        |
| 2005-2006      | Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, Illinois<br>Adjunct Instructor, Department of Health Studies                    |
| 2000-2001      | Milford Township High School, Milford, Illinois<br>Teacher, Spanish  |

JUGGLING TODDLERS, TEENS, AND TENURE: THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL  
REALITIES OF WOMEN ON THE TENURE TRACK  
WITH CHILDREN

---

A Dissertation

Presented to

The College of Graduate and Professional Studies

Department of Educational Leadership, Administration, and Foundations

Indiana State University

Terre Haute, Indiana

---

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

---

by

Jennifer Lynn Baker Sipes

May 2010

© Jennifer Lynn Baker Sipes 2010

Keywords: higher education, women, mothers, tenure, children

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Committee Chair: Dr. Mary Howard-Hamilton

Professor

Indiana State University

Committee Member: Dr. Kandace Hinton

Associate Professor

Indiana State University

Committee Member: Dr. Douglas Bower

Associate Dean of the College of Education and Professional Studies

Eastern Illinois University

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to understand the personal and professional experiences of women faculty on the tenure track with children. Despite more than 30 years of conversation about gender equity since the passage of Title IX as part of the Education Amendments of 1972, an inverse relationship persists between the prestige of an academic rank and the percentage of women in that rank. Recent research has drawn attention to differences in marital and family status between men and women faculty in higher education, suggesting that childrearing may serve as an impediment to the career advancement of women faculty in higher education. Discovering and understanding the lived experiences of women on the tenure track with children is critical to the recruitment and retention of talented women faculty.

Utilizing a qualitative phenomenological approach, this study examined the unique stories of eight purposefully selected women faculty with children under the age of 18. Participants were selected from three Midwestern universities. Participant demographics varied by institutional type, academic rank, academic field, relationship status, age of children, and ethnicity/nationality.

An analysis of the experiences of the participants in this study yielded five themes: enjoying it all...with some compromises, departmental support, sharing 50/50 at home, outside support systems, and challenges. This study recognized challenges for mothers in academia, but emphasized that mothers can be both successful and happy in the academy.

The findings of this study serve as an encouragement to women who desire motherhood and a career in academia. Though some personal and professional decisions of academic mothers may need to be purposeful, the academy potentially offers a positive environment for balancing career and family. Because of the challenges faced by the participants in this study, the findings may also be used to influence institutional and departmental policies related to work and family.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The participants in this study talked about the importance of mentors, departmental support, sharing 50/50 at home, and outside support systems. Throughout this doctoral journey, I have been blessed with all of these. With deep thankfulness, there are several people whom I would like to acknowledge.

Thank you to Dr. Mary Howard-Hamilton and Dr. Kandace Hinton for serving as committee members for this dissertation and for offering feedback and suggestions to strengthen the study. Thank you for building an academic program which emphasizes a respect for diversity, and thank you for teaching with an ethic of care. Thank you for appreciating my interest in the experiences of academic women with children and for supporting my desire to pursue this line of research.

I would like to extend my gratitude to Dr. Doug Bower. Dr. Bower, it's hard to believe that seven years have passed since I sat in your research methods class as a first-year master's student. When I registered for that class, I had no idea that I was about to meet a tremendous mentor. The phrase "thank you" seems far from adequate, but I'm not sure what else to say. Thank you for guiding me through a master's thesis, two internships, and this dissertation. Thank you for being the person that I always know that I can count on as my professional sounding board. Thank you for believing that nothing is more important than family and that no meeting is more important than your son's big soccer game. Thank you for taking the time to listen and answer my questions, even when I know you did not really have that time to spare.

When people ask me twenty years from now who my mentors were during graduate school and the early years of my career, your name will always be at the top of that list.

Greta's description of the role of department chairs was one of the most memorable quotes from this study. Greta candidly explained, "As faculty, your life can be hell or it can be blissful, depending on your department chair." I believe that the same can be said regarding the supervisors of women in student affairs or women in higher education administration. I am incredibly fortunate to work for Dr. Dan Nadler, a vice president who is both a dedicated administrator and a devoted father to two young children. Dr. Nadler, thank you for encouraging me to "get 'r done," even when that meant approving my request for a two month personal leave to write the last 100 pages. Thank you for your commitment to professional development and your faith in my ability.

Thank you to Mr. Keith Kohanzo for coming out of retirement to serve in the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs during my two month absence. If a list were written of the top ten people to positively impact the lives of students throughout the history of Eastern Illinois University, I know that your name, Keith, would be among those ten. You are also one of the most humble individuals whom I have ever met. I will be in your debt for many years to come for your willingness to step in during my leave.

I would like to offer a special thank you to the eight women who participated in this study. Thank you for sharing your stories with me. I will think of you and your families often in the years to come and wish you the very best, as professors and as mothers.

This dissertation was about family. I owe my very deepest appreciation to my own family—my parents, my husband, and our two children—who made this degree program possible. Mom and Dad, thank you for teaching me about the importance of education and hard

work. Mom, thank you for the countless evening and weekend hours that we spent working together at the kitchen table throughout my childhood. You graded your students' papers and wrote lesson plans while I sat beside you doing my homework. It was from you, Mom, that I learned what it means to care about students on a very personal level. Dad, thank you for teaching me that "preparation is the key to success." Thank you for believing in me and being proud of me. Near the end of this process, you told me that my graduation day would be "bigger than the Super Bowl" for you. That means so much to me, Dad. Thank you for the many times that you both picked Anna and Josh up from Immanuel, fed them dinner, bathed them, and brought them home ready for bed so that I could squeeze in a couple more hours of writing. Thank you for the hours that you helped with the kids on the weekends, and special thanks to the "laundry fairy."

John, I am amazed when I reflect on these past ten years. (Can you believe that our wedding day was nearly a decade ago?) Together, we have completed four academic degrees, welcomed two wonderful children into the world, embarked on our careers, and moved three times. As a team, we have survived newborn colic, changed hundreds (maybe thousands) of diapers, endured toddler temper tantrums, and learned how to function after a night of frequently interrupted sleep. We have also learned to savor life through the eyes of our children. We have experienced anew the fun of jumping in giant leaf piles, making snow angels, hiking down to the river, and running through the sprinkler. We have marveled as we watched our daughter become a voracious reader and a roller coaster daredevil and our son become so eager to start kindergarten that he wanted to pack his backpack with nearly a full year of preschool remaining. I am so thankful for the family that God has given us and look forward to enjoying more time together when this study is completed.



Finally, I would like to extend my thanks and love to the two people who inspired my interest in this research topic—our children. Thank you for your patience during the many hours that I have spent studying and writing. Anna and Josh, you are the most precious blessings that God has given me. Daddy and I are so thankful that He has allowed us to be your parents. No academic credential or job title will ever come close to being as important to me as the name “Mommy.” I love you both with all of my heart.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |      |
|--|------|
| ABSTRACT.....                              | iii  |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....                      | v    |
| LIST OF TABLES.....                        | xiii |
| Introduction.....                          | 1    |
| Women in Higher Education .....            | 2    |
| Statement of the Problem.....              | 4    |
| Purpose of the Study .....                 | 5    |
| Research Question .....                    | 6    |
| Significance of the Study.....             | 6    |
| Personal Statement.....                    | 7    |
| Personal Values.....                       | 9    |
| Organization of the Dissertation .....     | 10   |
| Literature Review.....                     | 13   |
| Women in the Workforce.....                | 13   |
| The Second Shift.....                      | 14   |
| The Third Shift.....                       | 16   |
| Women in the Corporate World.....          | 21   |
| History of Women in Higher Education ..... | 25   |
| Academic Mothers .....                     | 29   |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Socialization to Behave Like the Majority .....               | 31 |
| Theoretical Framework .....                                   | 33 |
| Legal Framework .....   | 35 |
| The Common Tick-Tock: Childbearing and the Tenure Track ..... | 37 |
| Work/Life Policies in Academia .....                          | 41 |
| Managing Faculty and Family Roles in Academia .....           | 44 |
| Summary of Literature Review .....                            | 47 |
| Research Methodology .....                                    | 49 |
| Qualitative Design .....                                      | 49 |
| Phenomenology .....   | 50 |
| Researcher Role .....   | 50 |
| Participants .....  | 51 |
| Data Collection .....   | 52 |
| Data Analysis .....   | 53 |
| Data Verification .....                                       | 53 |
| Human Subjects .....  | 53 |
| Summary of Study Design and Methodology .....                 | 54 |
| Participant Stories .....                                     | 55 |
| Institutional Description .....                               | 56 |
| Allie's Story .....   | 57 |
| Kay's Story .....   | 62 |
| Sally's Story .....   | 71 |
| Emily's Story .....   | 79 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Greta's Story .....  | 86  |
| Sadie's Story .....  | 91  |
| Sarah's Story .....  | 97  |
| Ayana's Story .....  | 102 |
| Summary of Participant Stories .....                       | 106 |
| Themes .....   | 112 |
| Enjoying It All... With Some Compromises .....             | 113 |
| Departmental Support .....                                 | 125 |
| Sharing 50/50 at Home .....                                | 138 |
| Outside Support Systems .....                              | 143 |
| Challenges .....   | 148 |
| Summary of Themes .....                                    | 165 |
| Analysis and Interpretation .....                          | 167 |
| Enjoying It All. . . With Some Compromises .....           | 168 |
| Departmental Support .....                                 | 170 |
| Sharing 50/50 at Home .....                                | 171 |
| Outside Support Systems .....                              | 172 |
| Challenges .....   | 172 |
| Summary of Analysis .....                                  | 176 |
| Conclusion .....   | 178 |
| Importance of this Study .....                             | 179 |
| Limitations .....  | 180 |
| Recommendations for Institutions of Higher Education ..... | 181 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Recommendations for Department Chairs.....           | 183 |
| Recommendations for Mothers Aspiring to Tenure ..... | 184 |
| Recommendations for Future Research .....            | 185 |
| Conclusion .....                                     | 187 |
| References.....                                      | 189 |
| Appendix A: Informed Consent Document .....          | 197 |
| Appendix B: Interview Protocol .....                 | 200 |

## LIST OF TABLES

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Table 1 <i>Professional Demographics of Participants</i> ..... | 56 |
| Table 2 <i>Personal Demographics of Participants</i> .....     | 57 |

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

The *Chronicle of Higher Education* has called attention to the decisions of women with children leaving their tenure-track positions at colleges and universities (Fogg, 2003). Fogg described the lifestyle that led Karen Gaul to sell her car, pack up her home, and move across the country to Alaska for a part-time job with the National Park Service:

After Karen Gaul returned from maternity leave, she set up a playpen in the office next to hers at Hendrix College. Students baby-sat while the assistant professor of anthropology taught classes and did her research. She learned to work quickly and efficiently between changing diapers and breastfeeding. She even brought her daughter, Kameko, to faculty meetings. But after two years of struggling to combine single motherhood with an intense academic workload, including serving on multiple committees, teaching three courses a semester, and advising 15 undergraduates, Ms. Gaul decided to leave academe, even though her provost assured her she would receive tenure this year. (p. A10)

Gaul's decision to leave academe was finalized when she paused to think about her life and asked introspectively, "Is this all there is?" (p. A10).

According to Fogg (2003), Gaul is not alone. Bonnie K. MacKellar left a tenured position in computer science at Western Connecticut State University for a job in industry that offered better hours and higher pay. Not until she left academe did MacKellar believe that her

job was compatible with having children. Heidi R. Tilghman left a tenured position in Germanics at Knox College for a position as an assistant to the associate dean for academic programs at the University of Washington Graduate School. Tilghman explained her decision to leave her faculty position when her daughters were 6 and 10:

As my daughters got older and their need for emotional support increased—and as Knox College began to teeter financially and we were all asked to do yet more for the community—I simply could not successfully negotiate that balance any longer. (p. A12)

Tilghman described her satisfaction with her new role in higher education: “I go home and leave my work at work. That’s been very good for me, wonderful for my husband, wonderful for my marriage and for my kids” (p. A12).

This qualitative study was designed to examine the personal and professional realities of women on the tenure track with children. During individual semi-structured interviews, eight participants described their lived experiences as mothers in academe. Understanding and responding to the needs of women balancing career and family is imperative to the recruitment and retention of women as faculty in higher education.

### **Women in Higher Education**

West and Curtis (2006) demonstrated how the passage of Title IX as part of the Education Amendments of 1972 furthered the integration of women into graduate programs and careers in higher education. In 1972, women earned 16% of doctorates awarded in the United States; by 2004, women earned 48% of doctorates. Among United States citizens, women received over half (53%) of Ph.D.s awarded in 2004. Although only 27% of all faculty in higher education were women in 1972, 39% of full-time faculty and 48% of part-time faculty were



women in 2003. The percentage of women in full professor positions at four-year colleges and universities has risen from 9% in 1972 to 24% in 2003.

As the presence of women faculty has increased, so too has the presence of women administrators at colleges and universities. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2006), half (51.5%) of executive, administrative, and managerial positions at higher education institutions were held by women in 2005. The American Council on Education (2007) found that the percentage of female presidents more than doubled from 9.5% in 1986 to 23% in 2006.

Although opportunities for women in higher education have consistently advanced over the past three decades, equity has not yet been achieved. According to the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) (2004), there is tremendous discrepancy in the representation of full-time women faculty in the professoriate according to institutional type. In 2004, women accounted for 50% of faculty at community colleges, but only 41% of faculty at baccalaureate and master's degree institutions and 33% of faculty at doctorate-granting institutions. Similarly, the American Council on Education (2007) found that women presidents are most likely to lead associate's colleges; they are least likely to lead doctorate-granting institutions. In 2006, women represented 29% of presidents at associate's colleges but only 13.8% of presidents at doctorate-granting institutions.

Across all ranks and institutional types, male faculty continue to earn higher salaries than female faculty (AAUP, 2004). On average in 2004, women faculty earned 80% of the salary earned by men faculty. The earning gaps between men and women faculty were smallest at the rank of instructor and largest at the rank of full professor; for all institutional types combined, women earned 96% of the salary of men at the instructor rank but only 88% of the salary of men

at the full professor rank. The AAUP data indicated that these ratios have remained fairly constant over the past 25 years. By institutional type, the earning gaps between men and women faculty in 2004 were smallest at community colleges without ranks and largest at doctorate-granting institutions; women earned 96% of the salary of men at community colleges without ranks but only 78% of the salary of men at doctorate-granting institutions.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite 30 years of conversation about gender equity, a snapshot of the academic ranks continues to show an inverse relationship between the percentage of women in a rank and the prestige of that rank (AAUP, 2004). As rank increases, the percentage of women at that rank decreases. Among full-time faculty in 2004, women accounted for 58% of instructors, 46% of assistant professors, 38% of associate professors, and 23% of full professors (AAUP). West and Curtis (2006) asserted that the shortage of women at top academic ranks is due to factors above and beyond the historical exclusion of women from higher education:

The relative lack of women at the full professor level is the cumulative result of multiple barriers at many points along the career path, plus the remaining historical legacy of women's earlier exclusion from graduate education prior to the enactment of Title IX in 1972. Some full professors have held their positions for decades. However, as older faculty—predominately men—retire, historical patterns no longer explain completely women's low percentage within the full professor ranks. (p. 15)

Recent research has drawn attention to differences in marital and family status between men and women faculty in higher education. According to Marcus (2007), about two-thirds of tenured women are childless, compared with only one-third of tenured men. Mason and Goulden (2002) found that women in the humanities and social sciences who had a baby within five years

of completing a Ph.D. were nearly 20% less likely than men who had babies in the same time frame to have achieved tenure 12 to 14 years after completion of the degree. Interestingly, men who became fathers within five years of completing a Ph.D. achieved tenure at slightly higher rates than men without children. In follow-up research, Mason and Goulden (2004) found that women who achieved tenure were more than twice as likely as men who achieved tenure to be single 12 years after completing a Ph.D.

The American Council on Education (2007) revealed similar differences between women and men presidents. In 2006, 89% of male presidents were currently married, compared with 63% of female presidents. Ten percent of women presidents had never been married, compared with only 3% of men. Consistent with the differences in marital status, women presidents (68%) were less likely than male presidents (91%) to have children. Despite being less likely to be married or have children, women presidents were more likely (15%) than male presidents (5%) to have left the workforce or worked part-time due to family responsibilities. Women presidents who left the workforce or worked part-time to raise children spent an average of five years away from their careers, compared with three years for male presidents.

Although research indicates that childrearing may serve as an impediment to the career advancement of women faculty in higher education, it is also clear that some women have successfully earned tenure while raising children. Rarely have the voices of women in the midst of balancing a tenure-track position with the demands of raising children been heard.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to understand the personal and professional experiences of women faculty on the tenure track with children. Understanding these lived experiences is critical for the recruitment and retention of talented women faculty.

Colleges and universities depend on talented, diverse faculty and administrators to build and sustain institutions that prepare students for leadership in a global context. According to Evans and Chun (2007), “Talent is the engine that drives creative scholarship, fuels research and service initiatives, supports community, and ignites the educational process. Talent is an essential and differentiating factor in furthering the goals of the academy” (p. 5). Evans and Chun asserted that absolutely nothing was more critical to the competitive advantage of colleges and universities than the ability to recruit and retain talented and diverse faculty and staff.

### **Research Question**

The primary research question for this study was: How does childrearing affect the personal and professional realities of women on the tenure track?

### **Significance of the Study**

Evans and Chun (2007) wrote, “For higher education leadership, diversity is not a choice; it is a practical imperative” (p. 4). Diverse and talented faculty and administrators improve campus engagement, civic preparation of students, and institutional quality; diversity is also emphasized by accrediting bodies (Evans & Chun, 2007, p. 174). One aspect of a diverse faculty involves the recruitment and retention of women. Sometimes recruiting and retaining women inherently means recruiting and retaining mothers.

Among people outside the academy, it is likely a popular myth that higher education would be the ideal working environment for people desiring career and family. Cohen (2002) debunked that myth in an article in the *New York Times*:

It would seem that a university—with its ability to allow teachers to work from home, its paid sabbatical semester and its famously liberal thinking—would be an ideal place to balance career and family. But by all accounts, the intense competition, the long hours

and the unspoken expectations of the academy's traditionally male culture conspire to make it really, really hard to have a baby and be a professor. (p. 24)

Listening to the personal and professional realities of women assistant professors and recently tenured associate professors with children will allow institutions of higher education to better understand and meet the needs of academic mothers.

### **Personal Statement**

My juggling act of career and family began when I applied for a master's degree program in college student affairs. I was 25 years old, and my husband and I were already the blessed parents of a baby girl named Anna. I vividly remember the summer afternoon that I first entered a graduate faculty member's office. I had scheduled an appointment to ask some brief questions about the college student affairs program. I expected the meeting to only last about 10 minutes, so my husband, who was also a graduate student, waited for me by driving our station wagon around the block with nine-month-old Anna in her carseat. Anna was still breastfeeding, but I had scheduled her eating times that day so that she would not be hungry while I attended the brief meeting. I knew that if she got hungry, there would be nothing that my husband could do to help her. She adamantly refused bottles and sippy cups. That should not be a problem, though, if the schedule went as planned.

Sometimes meetings do not go as we plan them. After the faculty member answered my list of questions, he and another professor suggested that they interview me on-the-spot for consideration for admission to the program. I knew that Anna would be hungry before the interview was over, but I also feared that asking to schedule the interview for a different time would be detrimental to the probability of my admission to the program. A warning, legitimate or not, sounded in my head, "Jenny, admitting that you have a breastfeeding infant and not doing

this interview right now could end your graduate school education before it ever begins!” I listened to the warning in my head and told the professor that I would be happy to do the interview. After we finished talking, I learned that the interview also included a handwritten essay that needed to be completed in the department’s conference room. Nearly two hours after my originally scheduled meeting time, I finally returned to my husband and daughter in the parking lot. Anna had been screaming hysterically for nearly an hour because she was hungry. My husband was dizzy from driving in circles and felt ringing in his ears from Anna’s piercing screams. As eager as I was to start graduate school, I could feel my heart tearing into two pieces the moment I saw my daughter crying. Self-doubt flooded over me and I judged myself, “What am I doing at this college at this time in my life? I should have told the professors that I had a hungry baby waiting for me and that I couldn’t stay for the interview, no matter what the cost of that decision might have been!” That was my introduction to mothering in the academy.

In retrospect, that first meeting was indicative of my experiences to come as a graduate student and new professional in higher education with children. It was simultaneously invigorating, empowering, frustrating, and discouraging. I was thrilled to be able to have a face-to-face professional conversation with a faculty member, one of my first conversations in nine months that had absolutely nothing to do with newborn bowel movements, late-night feedings, or colic. The academic in me sensed that I had returned home, professionally speaking; it was rejuvenating to be surrounded by bookshelves bursting with texts and piles of papers written by students. How I had missed those things! Yet, all of that was overshadowed the moment I saw my baby’s tear-streaked face. I was overcome with guilt that my child was hungry because of a decision that I consciously made.

By August, Anna took a bottle, and I enrolled in graduate classes part-time. At 25, I was the second oldest student in our master's cohort, one of only two married students, and the only student with a child. Throughout my master's coursework, I had eight professors: six men and two women. All six men had children or step-children; only one of the women had children. Interestingly, the faculty member who was a woman with children taught part-time. During a class discussion about future career plans, a couple of male students and I expressed interest in pursuing a Ph.D. The men were encouraged by the professor to pursue the degree; conversely, the professor told me, "If you get a Ph.D., you will end up divorced." I began to wonder about the ways in which the culture of higher education affects men and women differently. Ideas for this research study began to take root.

By the time I enrolled in a Ph.D. program in higher education leadership, we had become a family of four. Anna was four years old, and our son, Joshua, was one year old. Though most members of our Ph.D. cohort were married, there was a significant difference by gender in parenthood status. While several of the men had children who were babies, toddlers, or elementary school students, I was the only woman with young children. Throughout my doctoral coursework, I had six professors: four men and two women. I noted that all four men were fathers, but neither woman was a mother. As I looked around me on campus—at doctoral students, at graduate program faculty, at senior administrators—I saw a common theme. It seemed that the representation of women with children was very thin.

### **Personal Values**

As a mother in higher education, I value both my family and my career—in that order. I have had experiences as an academic mother that made my heart soar, and I have had experiences that left my heart aching for days. The summer before I started a Ph.D. program,

Anna proudly proclaimed to a stranger in Wal Mart, “When I grow up, I’m going to be a doctor at college like Mommy!” That was a good day. That fall, Anna confidently sang our university’s alma mater in front of thousands of students at the Homecoming Coronation assembly. Shortly after Coronation, a student saw me on campus, did a double take, and then exclaimed, “You’re Anna’s mom, aren’t you? Anna *made* my Homecoming!” That was a proud moment. On the opposite end of the emotional scale, my heart felt like it was breaking near the end of my first semester as a Ph.D. student. I was working full-time as an academic advisor on campus and taking classes full-time; I rarely left my office before midnight. One-year-old Josh no longer called out for “mama” if he awoke during the night or was sick. Anna sobbed at the front door nearly every morning, begging to go to work or class with me, just so that she could spend some time with me. That was my emotional low as a mother in higher education. Shortly before beginning my Ph.D. program, I wrote a letter for my children’s scrapbooks, a letter which I hope will be meaningful to them when they face their own career and family dilemmas in adulthood. As my concluding sentence, I wrote, “I could be president of Harvard, and that role would pale in comparison to my role as wife and mommy.” That same sentiment remains true. I value and appreciate my career, but my husband and children are the most important part of my life.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is organized into seven chapters. Chapter 1 introduces this qualitative study of the personal and professional experiences of women on the tenure track with children. A general overview of the presence of women in faculty and administrative positions at colleges and universities throughout the United States precedes an account of research indicating that childrearing may serve as an impediment to the career advancement of women faculty. The



introductory chapter emphasizes the importance of understanding the lived experiences of women faculty on the tenure track with children so that institutions of higher education can better recruit and retain a talented and diverse faculty. Chapter 1 concludes with my personal statement as the researcher, an indication of my understanding that my own experiences share some commonalities with the life experiences of the participants in this study and a promise that my experiences will be bracketed during the analysis of research data.

Chapter 2 presents a review of literature related to women in the workforce, with an emphasis on women faculty in higher education. A review of the literature commences with an examination of the increased presence of women in work roles, time spent by working women on household and childcare responsibilities, and women's psychological struggle of second guessing themselves as professionals and as mothers. From there, the chapter moves into a specific focus on the exploration of the historical exclusion of women from higher education, the eventual entrance of women into colleges and universities, and the remaining legacy of male culture in academia. Recognizing the reality that women typically earn tenure during their prime childbearing years, the literature review continues with an examination of literature related to the effect of the tenure track on women's childbearing decisions. Finally, chapter 2 addresses the use of work/life policies in academia and strategies utilized by women faculty to manage career and family roles.

Chapter 3 describes the qualitative phenomenological research design used in this study. Descriptions are provided regarding the role of the researcher, selection of participants, collection of data, analysis of data, and verification of data. Chapter 3 closes with an explanation of steps taken to ensure that the study did not pose potential risks or harm to participants.

Chapters 4 through 6 share the results of this study. In chapter 4, the unique story of each of the eight participants is told by focusing on three major events in her life: becoming a mother, becoming a terminal degree holder, and becoming a professor. Chapter 5 continues to share the voices of the participants through five themes found in the study: enjoying it all with some compromises, institutional support, sharing 50/50 at home, outside support systems, and challenges. Chapter 6 provides an analysis of the five themes which emerged from the data.

Chapter 7 concludes the dissertation. The limitations of the study are recognized, and recommendations are offered to institutions of higher education, department chairs, and women considering or pursuing a tenure-track career. Finally, recommendations are made for future research.

## CHAPTER 2

### **Literature Review**

This chapter examines the existing literature on women in the workforce, with an emphasis on mothers in academia. Less than two short centuries ago, colleges and universities were worlds which prohibited the presence of women. As Woody (1966) explained, “It was feared that women might forsake their infants for quadratic equations” (p. 138). This chapter explores that historical exclusion, the eventual entrance of women into colleges and universities, and the remaining legacy of male culture in higher education. Because women typically earn tenure during their prime childbearing years, literature regarding the simultaneous ticking of women’s tenure clock and biological clock is discussed. Finally, this chapter addresses the use of work/life policies in academia and strategies utilized by women faculty to manage career and family roles.

### **Women in the Workforce**

Women with children are now an integral part of the United States workforce. According to the United States Census Bureau (2008), 26.2 million American women with children under age 18 were in the labor force in 2005 (72.9% of single mothers; 68.1% of married mothers; and 79.8% of widowed, divorced, or separated mothers). Among those women were 10.4 million women with children under six years of age. Since 1970, the number of working mothers has more than doubled, suggesting that women are in the workforce to stay.

## The Second Shift

In addition to their roles in the labor force, research has noted additional shifts worked by mothers. Hochschild (2003) examined the “second shift” (p. 4) worked by women, the shift worked at home on housework and childcare duties. From 1980 to 1988, Hochschild interviewed 145 people—100 husbands and wives (50 dual career couples) and 45 other people, including babysitters, daycare workers, teachers, traditional couples with small children, and divorced parents who had been in dual career marriages. Hochschild’s research also included in-depth observations of 12 families and a quantitative analysis of all 50 families. Twenty percent of the men in Hochschild’s study shared housework equally with their wives. Seventy percent of men did less than half but more than one-third of the housework; ten percent of men did less than one-third of the family’s housework. Hochschild further noted, “Even when couples share more equitably in the work at home, women do two-thirds of the *daily* jobs at home, like cooking and cleaning up—jobs that fix them into a rigid routine” (pp. 8-9). Hochschild described how the second shift disproportionately affects women:

As masses of women have moved into the economy, families have been hit by a “speed-up” in work and family life. There is no more time in the day than there was when wives stayed home, but there is twice as much to get done. It is mainly women who absorb this “speed-up.” (p. 8)

There are signs that the dynamic of the second shift is slowly changing. In *Generation and Gender in the Workplace*, the Families and Work Institute (2003) compared married employees in 1977 with married employees in 2002. Fathers in 2002 spent nearly an hour more per day with their children than fathers in 1977. Among married couples with children, mothers spent approximately the same amount of time in 2002 taking care of their children on days when

they were working as they did in 1977 (approximately 3.3 to 3.4 hours per workday), but the amount of time that fathers spent taking care of their children increased significantly from 1.8 hours to 2.7 hours per workday. Additionally, the amount of time that married women spent doing household chores on workdays decreased from 3.3 hours in 1977 to 2.7 hours in 2002. Married men made up that difference by increasing the amount of time that they spent doing household chores on workdays from 1.2 hours in 1977 to 1.9 hours in 2002. Younger employees expressed greater acceptance of maternal employment than older employees. Sixty-three percent of Generation Y employees (18 through 22 years old) disagreed that traditional gender roles were better, compared with 49% of Mature employees (over 58 years old). The majority of Generation Y employees had employed mothers themselves, and 82% agreed that “a mother who works outside the home can have just as good a relationship with her children as a mother who is not employed” (p. 5).

Although employed married women continue to spend significantly more time on childcare and household chores than their husbands, effectively continuing to work a second shift, the difference in men’s behavior at home is notable. As men take more responsibility for childcare and household chores, they may begin to resist demands for overtime work that is scheduled at the last minute, request leave time for child-related purposes, and engage in other such behaviors that have typically been associated with female employees. As the Families and Work Institute (2003) put it, “Work-family issues are clearly family issues, not just women’s issues” (p. 13).

In *Flux: Women on Sex, Work, Love, Kids, and Life in a Half-Changed World*, Orenstein (2000) asserted that couples who share household responsibilities most equally are “those in which the salaries are similar and the *husband* has a flexible job. . . . and that serves as a

corrective to the tendency of moms to automatically do it all” (p. 198). Brooke and Matt Bromberg are an example of the type of couple described by Orenstein. Brooke, a 35-year-old lawyer by training and a senior vice president at a boutique private banking firm in New York, and Matt, a securities firm attorney who practices in New York, are the parents of a 3-year-old daughter and a 7-month-old son. Sachs (2005) outlined the Brombergs’ shared responsibilities:

Matt takes his children to daycare each morning while Brooke commutes to the city from New Jersey. Brooke does the after-work pickup as Matt, who gets home around 6:30 p.m., prepares dinner. Both Matt and Brooke feed and bathe their kids together and alternate on who puts whom to sleep. . . . Brooke does laundry every Friday when she’s home from work. And Matt goes grocery shopping at 9:00 a.m. every Sunday with his daughter Lilly, where he meticulously plots almost a week’s worth of dinners days in advance. (p. 52)

Matt Bromberg explained why he chose to equally share parenting responsibilities with his wife:

I certainly recognize that Brooke works just as hard as I do, and I also recognize that she can get stressed by her job, and like any normal person, gets frustrated with the kids. I simply try to do my share. (p. 53)

### **The Third Shift**

Bolton (2000) noted the “third shift” (p. 1) worked by women managing work and family. During the third shift, a psychological phenomenon rather than a literal one, women second-guess themselves as professionals and as mothers, privately asking a host of dizzying questions, including:

Am I doing it “right”? Am I sacrificing time with friends and family for the false gods of ambition and material success? Is the high of luring a new client as lasting as the joy of

watching my son smash a double way into the outfield? Am I turning my back on career success by settling for the “mommy track”? (p. 2)

Weaver, chair of the Religious Studies Department at Ursuline College, described how an encounter with a colleague’s teenage son caused her to wrestle with her own decisions as the academic mother of a toddler:

On my way back to my office the other day, I ran into a colleague accompanied by her son, a handsome, six-foot-tall high school senior. She smiled at me and said, “Mine was the size of yours just a blink ago.” “A blink?” I inquired. “One blink,” she nodded. I grinned in return, but the encounter left me unsettled. I wonder how I will feel a blink from now, when I am driving my boy, now seventeen months old, to his own college visits in preparation for his exodus into adulthood. Will I regret the choice I made to work when he was young? (2008, p. 77)

Evans, CEO and President of *Working Mother* magazine, referred to Bolton’s (2000) “third shift” as “The National Guilt Trip” (2006, p. 20). Evans wrote, “Nearly every working mother I have ever met has felt plagued by guilt” (p. 21). Because of this phenomenon, the very first issue of *Working Mother*, published in 1979, introduced a monthly feature titled “The Guilt Department.” This remained the magazine’s most popular feature for 15 years. In 1980, a teacher described her feelings of guilt to the magazine’s editors: “When I’m at work I worry that I am not with my baby, and when I’m at home I worry that I am not prepared enough for tomorrow’s classes” (p. 21).

Reflecting on the launch of *Working Mother* in 1979, Evans admitted, “We didn’t foresee that guilt would still be a prime emotion for our readers twenty-six years later” (2006, p. 21). Evans described Samantha Muchmore, a young media director whom she met in San Francisco

in 2002. At the time of their meeting, Muchmore was surprised by the painful emotions which she was feeling about leaving her nine-month-old daughter in the arms of a caregiver:

Samantha was in her early thirties, and had risen to the top of her profession through a killer combination of brains, determination, and style. She had thought that it would be a straightforward transition from executive to executive mom, but instead she found herself weepy and confused. She contemplated quitting her job, but deep inside she felt that if she did, she would regret it and would not be able to regain her position. So she toughed it out. (p. 22)

In her monthly CEO column in *Working Mother*, Evans (2006) continues to write about her own feelings of guilt as a working mother to two teenage children, Julia Rose and Robert. Without fail, Evans receives a “flood of letters” (p. 53) in response, all from other mothers wrestling with guilt. A working mother from Chicago wrote to Evans:

I read your CEO Note in the March issue on the train, in the morning, just after my little daughter (two years old) had grabbed my leg and asked me not to go to work. [Reading about your feelings of guilt with Julia Rose] made me feel much better about my own experience. Thanks! (p. 53)

Like Evans (2006), Sachs (2005) observed that guilt and motherhood seem “brutally intertwined” (p. 72). According to Sachs, “Feelings of guilt, worry, anxiety, and ambivalence crackle through many Stay-at-Work moms who wonder if they are making the right choice and fear that they are missing out both at work and at home” (p. 72). Sachs offered a personal example of her own struggle with guilt as she neared the completion of writing *How She Really Does It: Secrets of Successful Stay-at-Work Moms*:



On the days when my kids seem happy, work feels good. The minute they start having problems, however, I ultimately blame myself for not being home more. Ironically the day the manuscript for this book is due, a time when I've been working nonstop and haven't had time to come up for air, let alone had quality time to spend with my children, I find a teacher's note in my son's backpack from preschool. It reads: "Jonah has been having a hard time keeping his hands to himself and sharing. We have seen an increase in shoving and pushing. Is there anything going on at home?" Uggh. My heart drops. I get a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach. (p. 79)

From Sachs' personal experience, as well as from the experiences of more than 100 working mothers from across the United States whom she interviewed, Sachs recognized constant conflict between the dualistic standards of "Good Mother" (p. 76) and "Good Employee" (p. 76).

In the eyes of her students and colleagues, Cognard-Black (2008) appeared to have struck the perfect balance between "Good Mother" (Sachs, 2005, p. 76) and "Good Employee" (p. 76). The only female faculty member with a child in an English department of 13 at St. Mary's College of Maryland, Cognard-Black finished a dissertation on Victorian women writers in just nine months, defended that dissertation exactly two weeks before giving birth to her daughter, applied for 88 academic positions during the first two months of her daughter's life, completed six on-campus interviews before her daughter was six months old, and landed a tenure-track position at an excellent liberal arts college. As a junior faculty member, Cognard-Black quickly built a lengthy, impressive resume of teaching, research, and service. Cognard-Black explained:

I've coauthored a textbook; coedited a collection of letters; published my dissertation as a monograph; placed six short stories, two articles, and four encyclopedia entries; taught nine new courses; taken students to England twice; won two teaching awards; received a

junior faculty research award; obtained four additional grants to support my work; chaired a collegewide committee; hosted seven visiting writers; presented ten talks and conference papers; and been given the Student-Life Award for committee teaching and supportive mentorship. (pp. 132-133)

Immediately after earning tenure, embarking on her first sabbatical and writing her first novel, Cognard-Black was “well liked by colleagues, popular with students, and considered productive by members of [her] discipline” (p. 133).

Baring her soul, Cognard-Black (2008) admitted that she did not balance career and family nearly as well as it appeared to her students and colleagues. Cognard-Black explained the depth of what she sacrificed personally in order to be successful professionally:

The actual me is a slipshod parent, a partial partner, an inconsistent friend, an absent family member. In the same years that I’ve made all those lines on my CV, I’ve also missed being there in the room for Katharine’s first word (“book,” not a surprise—I’d planted it); being there when she took her first step; being there when she had a temperature of 104 degrees and had to go to the hospital. I’ve missed taking her to the county fair, to the pumpkin patch field trips, to architectural workshops for kids in Washington, D.C., or to an outdoor Artsfest held each autumn close to the college. I haven’t helped Katharine with her homework, haven’t picked her up from school; and most days, I haven’t bathed her, brushed her teeth, or put her to bed. (pp. 133-134)

Cognard-Black has only intermittently been involved in the life of her only sibling, is estranged from her closest departmental colleague, and has disconnected from her spouse to the point that they lead nearly separate lives. Reflecting on her life, Cognard-Black described her actual self as “often a wreck—insecure, driven by fears of rejection and disapproval” (p. 133).

Bolton (2000) attributed women's third shift to living in an era of social transition, when the gender roles for women are fluctuating. Bolton described society's multiple expectations of women:

Women are expected to fulfill significant responsibilities and leadership roles at work; prove themselves; master new industries and occupations (and in the process overcome biases and stereotypes); and *also* retain a nurturing, other-oriented role in the family and broader community. (p. 3)

To many women, the third shift is the most difficult of all. Bolton described the self-doubt that can fill the third shift:

This journey inward can be even more daunting than the dizzying climb through the glass ceilings of the outer workplace. Rather than providing the serenity of an oasis, our third shift offers negative, self-critical voices, shouting at us what we are doing wrong, not what we are doing right. (p. 3)

### **Women in the Corporate World**

With the release of her book *Creating a Life*, Hewlett (2003) created media chaos. Revealing a "painful, well-kept secret" (p. 31), Hewlett described the realities of the 42% of high-achieving career women (those earning more than \$55,000 or \$65,000 depending on age) in corporate America who were childless at ages 40 to 55:

By and large, these high-achieving women have not chosen to be childless. The vast majority yearn for children. Indeed, many have gone to the ends of the earth to find a baby, expending huge amounts of time, energy, and money. They subject themselves to humiliating medical procedures, shell out tens of thousands of dollars, and derail their careers. Mostly to no avail. After age 40 only 3 to 5 percent of those who use the new

assisted reproductive technologies (IVF and the like) actually succeed in having a child—no matter how much they spend, no matter how hard they try. (pp. 31-32)

*Time*, *People*, *New York* magazine, and the *Harvard Business Review* all ran cover stories on the book. Major coverage was given to the text by news anchors Aaron Brown, Tom Brokaw, and Peter Jennings, while Hewlett appeared on *Oprah*, *The View*, and the *Today Show*. Within three months of its release, *Creating a Life* generated passionate reactions from around the world; newspaper articles about the book appeared in cities as widespread as London, Palm Beach, Sao Paulo, Chicago, Paris, Cambridge, Jerusalem, Sydney, Glasgow, Toronto, and Rome.

The high-achieving women interviewed by Hewlett (2003) told “haunting stories of children being crowded out of their lives by high-maintenance careers and needy partners” (p. 2). Polsky, a 44-year-old economist who earned a coveted position with Morgan Stanley on Wall Street, described the realization that her childbearing years were over:

What gnaws at me is that I always assumed I would have children—I’m someone who loves kids. In my twenties I put real energy into finding the right man and getting married so that I could have children in the right context. I did get married, but children still eluded me. Somehow I imagined having a child was something I would get to in a year or so, after the next promotion, when I was more established. I just wasn’t able to grab the golden ring. (Hewlett, 2003, p. 121)

Forty-nine-year-old Sue Palmer, an international marketing director of a London-based accounting firm, explained how her career did not allow time for a romantic relationship:

Ten years ago an extremely valued personal assistant of mine told me at the end of a particularly grueling seventy-hour week, “You know, Sue, you couldn’t have a torrid love affair if you wanted to.” And I shot right back: “I couldn’t have a *tepid* love affair if

I wanted to.” That exchange sums up the situation. For twenty-five years this career of mine has sat in the center of my life, using up prime time. As a result, relationships and the possibility of marriage and children were just crowded out. I mean I never decided that I didn’t want a family, in fact I would love to have had a family. That phrase, “a creeping nonchoice,” pretty much sums up what happened to me. (p. 67)

While reflecting on her close relationship with her aging parents, Palmer paused and added:

You know, whenever you think you’ve come to terms with it—this business of not having children—it crops up again in another form. I try not to think about it, but when my parents die, I’ll have to deal with not having kids yet again. I now see it as a rolling loss. (p. 70)

Though millions of women were terrified by Hewlett’s (2003) findings, Sachs (2005), a junior level television producer for *Dateline*, was not surprised. Sachs described similar stories of successful women in the television news industry:

Amid the ample estrogen in the news business, I’ve found that many of the most senior and powerful women in television were either unhappily still single (“News Hags” are how some of the older, saltier gals refer to themselves) or married, but suffering from infertility. These women were at the apex of their big careers, they had collected fistfuls of Emmys, they were financially secure and professionally fulfilled, but many I met were personally struggling. (p. 22)

Sachs witnessed some colleagues, longing for babies, who underwent intensive infertility treatments, experienced multiple miscarriages, and incurred enormous debt. According to Sachs, “I had even heard about one network correspondent desperate to get pregnant who would run to

the lavatory while flying on Air Force One to shoot herself in the thigh with her fertility drugs in between chatting with President Bush” (p. 22).

After leaving *Dateline* to strike a better balance between career and family, Sachs (2005) spent two years interviewing and surveying more than 100 working mothers across the nation. Sachs described these women as Stay-at-Work moms because they chose to stay in the workforce and *wanted* to have a career. According to Sachs, some of the Stay-at-Work moms whom she interviewed were successfully balancing career and family and were happy; others were struggling and trying to make personal and professional changes; and still more were attempting to redefine the image of success, career, and having it all. When asked what advice she would give to new moms juggling career and family, Ann Curry, NBC’s *Today* news anchor and mother of two, responded without hesitation:

You will get it eventually, and it may feel awful at first, but you have to figure out the system that works for you. I think if you love your job and you feel it’s a part of what you need to do with your life, then I would recommend that you don’t give it up, that you keep it, that you give it 100 percent when you’re at work, and then when you’re with your family you really give them 100 percent. (p. 50)

When Thalberg, a 35-year-old advertising and marketing executive in New York City returned to work after maternity leave, she was shocked to learn that there was no group that she could join to meet other working mothers. In response, Thalberg created Executive Moms, an organization and website devoted to professional mothers. Since its creation in 2002, Executive Moms has grown to support more than 2,000 members nationwide. Busch, a 35-year-old attorney who specialized in elder law at a small boutique firm in New York City, left her law firm a few

months after the birth of her second child, opting for a more family-friendly option of opening her own private practice.

Each year, *Working Mother* magazine publishes its list of 100 Best Companies for Working Mothers (Evans, 2006). These companies have adopted exemplary policies to assist working families. In 2004, 100% of 100 Best Companies offered at least some full-time employees the opportunity to drop back to part-time and later return to full-time, 97% offered job sharing, and 71% offered benefits to part-time employees who worked more than 20 hours. Johnson and Johnson and IBM, the only two companies to be named a Working Mother Best Company for all 20 years, recognize the need for quality childcare. Johnson and Johnson opened a childcare center in its New Jersey headquarters in 1989; IBM has funded the start-up, expansion, or major renovation of 39 childcare sites, funded improvements at an additional 26 childcare sites in the United States, and provided start-up or enhancement funds for 26 childcare centers at the company's international locations. Almost half of the 2004 Best Companies sponsored after-school care. S.C. Johnson maintains Armstrong Park, a 110-acre facility that houses swimming pools, basketball courts, a yoga center, and tennis and squash courts for use by employees and their families. S.C. Johnson will pick up the children and grandchildren of employees from any school in the Racine, Wisconsin, area and transport them to the Armstrong Park for after-school care. Ninety-nine percent of the 100 Best Companies have private rooms used for breastfeeding and other purposes; 80% have rooms dedicated solely to lactation.

### **History of Women in Higher Education**

In colonial America, higher education was “a forbidden world” for women (Solomon, 1985, p. 1). While the leaders of the Massachusetts Bay settlement recognized the importance of liberal education with the founding of Harvard College in 1636, women understood that the

doors of Harvard were not open to them. From birth, women were taught that their primary duty was to bear children; nearly all of the waking hours of females were consumed by domestic chores such as childcare, food preparation, and laundry. Women did not question their place in society; they accepted the societal expectation that women would be subordinate to their husbands.

During the unstable years of the American Revolution, some prominent colonial women reexamined the gender roles so deeply engrained in American society. Abigail Smith, the daughter of a liberal Puritan Massachusetts minister, was trained in domestic skills but also enjoyed access to books during her formative years. At age 19, Smith became the bride of an ambitious Harvard student named John Adams. Although Abigail Smith Adams held deep religious convictions and adhered to feminine virtues such as delicacy and modesty, she was also fully responsible for managing her husband's affairs and raising children during her husband's absence due to the American Revolution. According to Solomon (1985), "These experiences not only transformed [her] life but gave [her] an understanding of what women could contribute to the new republic" (pp. 7-8). As John Adams participated in the writing of the United States Constitution, his wife pleaded with him to consider the deficiencies in education for women. On August 14, 1776, Abigail Adams sent her husband a message describing her feelings of inadequacy in teaching their own children and advocating for the education of women. Adams wrote, "If we mean to have Heroes, Statesmen and Philosophers, we should have learned women" (Butterfield, 1963, p. 94).

In 1783, just after the colonies were granted independence from the English crown, a twelve-year-old girl named Lucinda Foote was found "fully qualified, except in regard to sex" (Woody, 1966, p. 137) to be admitted to the freshman class at Yale University. Because the



entryway to Yale was bolted shut to the bright Foote because of her gender, Rudolph (1990) described her examination as a “cruel joke” (p. 307). Rudolph lamented the thoughtlessness of allowing a child on the brink of adolescence to be tested by the most gifted Yale faculty, deemed equal in intelligence to the brightest young men, but then deprived of the opportunity to learn because her focus was supposed to be on her home. Despite the wisdom and supplications of prominent women such as Abigail Adams, America was not yet ready to accept young ladies into the world of higher learning.

Access to schooling for women began to increase between 1790 and 1850 as men realized the very notion which Abigail Adams had articulated to her husband decades earlier—that educated women were advantageous to society (Solomon, 1985). The first strong rationale for female education stemmed from women’s special role as mothers to male citizens. Society recognized that mothers served as the first and often the most important teacher and mentor to young boys who would grow into the future national leaders.

The door to higher education began to crack slightly open to women in the late 1830s. In 1837, Oberlin College in Ohio inaugurated coeducational higher education in the United States by enrolling four female freshmen (Rudolph, 1990). These Oberlin women were offered the traditional B.A. program, as well as a special Ladies Course which was recognized by a diploma. Seemingly well-satisfied with co-education, a male student at Oberlin wrote to another college’s publication, “Women are to be educated because we choose civilization rather than barbarism” (Fletcher, 1943, p. 383). Georgia Female College at Macon, the first attempt at an all-women college, was chartered in 1836 and opened in 1839 (Rudolph, 1990).

Around 1874, Harvard began offering its examinations to women. If women passed the examinations, they were awarded certificates for study which had been completed elsewhere

(Rudolph, 1990). Rudolph wrote, “These symbolic pats-on-the-back did not admit women to a Harvard classroom, but they did say, in effect, ‘Nice going. We must admit that even though you are women you can pass our exams’” (pp. 319-320). In 1879, Elizabeth Cary Agassiz led a group of Harvard professors who began offering courses for women at a location known as the Harvard Annex. The Annex was renamed Radcliffe College in 1893. Like at most colleges that allowed women to enroll during the later part of the 19th century, the opportunities for women and men taught by Harvard professors were far from equitable. In order to reach their seats in a heavily curtained back room at the Annex, female students had to climb through a window (Wenniger & Conroy, 2001).

The advancement of female education did not come without harsh critics. In 1873, Clark concluded in *Sex in Education* that if women used up their “limited energy” on studying, they would endanger their “female apparatus.” Although Clark recognized that females had the ability to study and learn, he asserted that she could not “do all this, and retain uninjured health and a future secure from neuralgia, uterine disease, hysteria, and other derangements of the nervous system” (as cited in Solomon, 1985, p. 56). Similarly, Hall predicted in 1904 that women with educational aspirations would “become functionally castrated, unwilling to accept the limitations of married life,” and resentful when called upon to perform “the functions peculiar to their sex” (Solomon, p. 60).

Like the American Revolution nearly two centuries before it, World War II brought much uncertainty to American life. The war’s end once again brought the domestic front to the top of the nation’s agenda (Eisenmann, 2006). Four ideologies emerged, pressuring women’s behavior in terms of patriotic duty, economic participation, cultural role, and psychological needs. The patriotic ideology sent mixed messages to women who had options as trained professionals.

Generally speaking “the specific and deep uncertainties raised by the Cold War prompted Americans to envision home and family as a haven from a world at risk” (Eisenmann, 2006, p. 14). Women were encouraged to serve their nation by protecting their homes and raising patriotic, virtuous children. Simultaneously, however, the Korean War and the October 1957 Soviet launch of Sputnik added to the cry for womanpower in fields such as nursing, science, and engineering. The economic ideology pressured women to return jobs and economic independence that they had attained during the war to the newly-returned veterans. The cultural ideology praised women’s role of “offering a haven in a heartless world” (p. 30) and encouraged women to “bolster their husband’s self-worth through honoring their contributions to home and family” (p. 30). The postwar psychological ideology supported the other three expectations with a Freudian interpretation that women were best fulfilled through acceptance of their reproductive role. A series of articles in magazines such as *McCall’s*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and *Cosmopolitan* suggested that “women should adjust their expectations, learn more about their husband’s work, recognize that his sacrifices benefitted the family, cultivate their own talents, and by all means, not compete in their husbands’ arena” (p. 38). Despite these ideologies, Eisenmann found that the number of women in higher education increased steadily from 700,000 in 1948 to 1.7 million in 1963.

### **Academic Mothers**

The road for 21st century academic mothers was paved by women who boldly overstepped the gender roles expected by society. Lucretia Mott, who served as a role model to Oberlin alumnae Lucy Stone and Antoinette Brown Blackwell in the 1850s, “preached while bringing up the family, being in perfect amity with her husband who aided her in the care of the children” (Solomon, 1985, p. 37). Mary Frame Meyers studied medicine together with her

husband after the birth of their third child and served as a doctor during the Civil War. In the fall 1875 issue of the *Vassar Alumnae Magazine*, Julia Pease questioned “why a woman who intends to be a doctor should know how to do everything that occurs in a household, anymore than a man who is also a physician should need to know how to plan and build a house for his family like a common carpenter” (as cited in Solomon, p. 150). In 1930, Clara Brown urged society to recognize that “home-making is a man’s problem as well as a woman’s” (p. 150).

Although some women were willing to blaze a path for future academic mothers, that path was not worn without struggle. Ethel Puffer Howes, a graduate of Smith in 1891 who received a certificate for her work in fulfillment of Ph.D. requirements at Harvard before the granting of the degrees to women, taught philosophy and psychology at several colleges. As a wife, mother, and academic, Howes wrote honestly about her struggles as a woman who desired love and motherhood, along with her professional work. Howes asserted that “educators fostered self-deception in women students by giving them neither guidance nor guidelines to help them live in the two spheres, those of family and profession” (Solomon, 1985, p. 176). In 1928, the *Radcliffe Alumnae Information* posed the questions, “Can a woman successfully carry on a career and marriage simultaneously? Can she if she has children?” (as cited in Solomon, p. 172). In a 1966 study of former Columbia University graduate students, study participant Beth Isaacs recalled the reaction of a professor when she requested a graduate assistantship:

He said to me, “I can’t, Beth. You’re a very bright student but you’ll have children and quit working in the field and not be publishing papers which redound to the credit and illustrious name of the university. So I will choose a male assistant.” (Eisenmann, 2006, p. 43)

More than a century after bold women such as Howes began establishing a place for women in academia, the struggle of living in “two spheres” (Solomon, 1985, p. 176) persists. Hudock (2006) captured the basic essence of the problem of the academic timeline for women faculty in the 21st century:

If a woman goes to graduate school fresh out of undergraduate study, she could potentially be finished with her Ph.D. by age 28 (and few people finish that quickly). Then, if she gets a tenure-track job immediately after graduation (and fewer people do), the tenure clock starts ticking, and she has six years to do the teaching, service, and publishing demanded for tenure. Thus, if all goes perfectly, she’ll come up for tenure at age 35. Then, if she is awarded tenure, she can consider having a baby at age 36. But having this baby requires she has an appropriate partner or access to genetic material at the right time, that her eggs are still viable, that her student loans don’t keep her financially insecure, and that she won’t fear that her faculty colleagues will see her as copping out. (¶3-4)

### **Socialization to Behave Like the Majority**

As women continue to be a minority among senior-ranking faculty and administrators in the academy, they are socialized to behave like the majority. As Collay (2002) wrote, “One of the greatest challenges women face on the road to tenure is that the engineers of the highway were men of privilege, and the expectations of academic performance reflect that social status” (p. 91). Toth (1997) offered a decade-by-decade timeline depicting the orientation of academic careers towards male norms:

In his twenties, the academic male is supposed to be getting his degree; in his thirties, he gets tenure; in his forties he starts becoming distinguished in his field. Along the way,

his time and energy go to research, while his wife deals with the everyday stuff, including children and home and food and clothing and keeping body and soul together (and never letting the children disturb Daddy's rest or writing). (p. 119)

Even as women are academically and professionally qualified for faculty careers at rates equal to that of their male peers, some are turning away from the academy because of the inequitable gender expectations described by Collay (2002). Marcus (2007) wrote, "...[women] are being discouraged from careers in academia because the timing and requirements of tenure make it so hard to raise families" (p. 28). It is critical that colleges and universities recognize "their own self-interest" (Marcus, 2007, p. 28) in recruiting and retaining the best prospective scholars and make substantial changes to the tenure system accordingly. Longer maternity leaves will not be enough; significant changes in both policy and culture are essential. As Marcus advocated, "It will take significant changes in America's higher education culture so that women no longer suspect—regardless of what the faculty handbook might say—that they'll be seen as weak for taking time off to raise a child" (p. 28).

McElreath (2008) described her introduction to higher education culture, and its underlying assumption that women with children are less committed to teaching, research, and service. McElreath was struck by this assumption at a departmental holiday party hosted by a senior tenured colleague. Because her colleague had penned "Bring your family!" (p. 89) at the bottom of the invitation, McElreath took her husband, four-year-old son, and eleven-month-old daughter to the gathering. Upon arrival, McElreath immediately realized that the home was not decorated with children in mind. As described by McElreath, "The house was beautifully decorated—I think *appointed* is the right word—and the Christmas tree was hung with what appeared to be hand-blown glass ornaments. Collectibles from around the world were tastefully

displayed” (p. 89). While trying to discuss her dissertation with a faculty member from another university, McElreath became tongue-tied as she watched her daughter grab at someone’s wine glass. More than anything else about the evening, McElreath remembered what the hostess, her colleague, said as McElreath and her family left:

She hugged me briefly at the door, took my hand in hers and shook it firmly. She urged me to “keep up with my job” by publishing and writing, and then said, squeezing my hand for extra emphasis, “don’t get *too* caught up in that mommy thing.” (p. 89)

Refusing to be socialized to minimize “that mommy thing” (p. 89), McElreath instead embraced her experience at the holiday party as an affirmation of who she was and what enabled her to feel complete as an individual. Boldly, McElreath concluded:

Motherhood has affected everything that I do, professionally and personally, and not getting caught up in it would be not only impossible, but damaging—to my job, my writing, and my life. And I remain eternally grateful to my colleague for helping me see it this way. (p. 92)

### **Theoretical Framework**

Barnett and Hyde (2001) outlined traditional theories of the relationships between gender, work, and family. These theories, largely developed in the 1950s, focused on biological, psychological, and sociological gender differences and emphasized the separation of work and family. Parsons (1949) observed the gender roles and marital stability of his era and concluded that family functioning was optimized when men specialized in the occupational system and women specialized as housewives. In agreement with Parsons, Zelditch (1955) suggested that gender role asymmetry was inevitable due to the biological fact that women bore and breastfed children:

At least one fundamental feature of the external situation of social systems—here a feature of the physiological organism—is a crucial reference point for differentiation in the family. This lies in the division of organisms into lactating and nonlactating classes. Only in our own society (so far as I know, that is) have we managed to invent successful bottle-feeding, and this is undoubtedly of importance for our social structure. In other societies necessarily—and in our own for structural reasons which have *not* disappeared with the advent of the bottle—the initial core relation of a family with children is the mother-child attachment. (p. 313)

Following Freud's (1949) theory that little girls are "overcome by envy for the penis" (p. 73) and wish to become boys, Erikson (1968) posited that a woman's sense of identity cannot be complete until she is married and has children. Sociobiologists and evolutionary psychologists suggested that the gender roles of contemporary men and women are rooted in the reproductive survival strategies of their genetic ancestors (Buss, 1989; Buss & Kenrick, 1998; Trivers, 1972). While prehistoric men competed with other men to access as many women as possible to increase the likelihood of passing on their genes, prehistoric women invested heavily in rearing a limited number of offspring to increase the likelihood that their children would reach adulthood.

After outlining contemporary studies which contradict traditional theories regarding gender differences and work (e.g., Barnett & Baruch, 1985; Barnett & Marshall, 1993; Epstein, 1988; Hyde & Plant, 1995; Simons, 1992; Thoits, 1992; Wethington & Kessler, 1989), Barnett and Hyde (2001) posited an expansionist theory of gender, work, and family. According to Barnett and Hyde, "the facts underlying the assumptions of these classical theories have changed so radically as to make the theories obsolete" (p. 784). Barnett and Hyde's expansionist theory consists of four principles that better match the realities of today's families. First, in general,



multiple roles are beneficial to the mental, physical, and relationship health of both men and women. Women benefit from the addition of the worker role, just as men benefit from participating in the family role. Second, processes such as buffering, added income, social support, opportunities to experience success, expanded frame of reference, increased self-complexity, similarity of experiences, and gender-role ideology contribute to the relationship between multiple roles and beneficial effects. Third, the benefits of multiple roles are dependent upon the number of roles and the time demands of each role. When the number of roles becomes too high or the demands of a role become excessive, distress may arise. Fourth, psychological gender differences in men and women are generally small and do not force them into differentiated roles. Barnett and Hyde recognized that the principles of the expansionist theory, like the principles of the traditional theories, were shaped by the cultural norms of the historical period in which they were posited and may need amendment if cultural norms change.

### **Legal Framework**

Discrimination on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth, or related illnesses in employment opportunities, health or disability insurance programs, or sick leave plans is specifically prohibited under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as a result of the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 (Kaplin & Lee, 2006). Accordingly, pregnancy-related conditions must be treated the same as other disabilities, health insurance for pregnancy-related conditions must extend to the wives of male employees as they extend to female employees, and health benefit plans must provide the same level of coverage to women as to men.

Though the right of women in the United States to work is protected, their working conditions lag behind the conditions for women in many other nations. With the support of the Ford Foundation, the Project on Global Working Families created the Work, Family, and Equity

Index to evaluate governmental performance of 173 nations around the world in meeting the needs of working families (Heymann, Earle, & Hayes, 2007). While 169 countries offer guaranteed paid leave to women in connection with childbirth, the United States does not. Ninety-eight countries offer 14 or more weeks of leave with income. Only three of the nations evaluated besides the United States offer no paid leave for mothers—Liberia, New Guinea, and Swaziland. The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993 in the United States offers 12 weeks of unpaid leave during a 12-month period to approximately half of all women in the nation; the other half of women in the United States have no guaranteed leave at all. In order to qualify for FMLA leave, women must be employed by an organization that has employed 50 or more employees, within a radius of 75 miles, for each working day during each of 20 or more weeks in the preceding year (Kaplin & Lee, 2006). Additionally, the employee must have worked for the employer for 1,250 hours during the previous 12 months. A full-time salaried employee for whom records of hours worked are not kept must have worked for the employer for 12 months in the past year. Full-time faculty are deemed to have met the 1,250-hour requirement by virtue of time spent at home reviewing homework and tests. As a result of inadequate leave policies, it appears that American women take some of the shortest maternity leaves in the world. Sachs (2005) found that professional women in the United States took between 2 and 12 weeks of maternity leave and that many worked from home in some capacity during that time.

At least 107 countries protect the right of working mothers to breastfeed, and lactation breaks are paid in at least 73 of those countries (Heymann et al., 2007). Despite the fact that breastfeeding reduces infant mortality, the United States has no policies to protect the right of working mothers to breastfeed. Because only 7% of big corporations in the United States offer

lactation rooms (Sachs, 2005), nursing mothers who are not fortunate enough to have a private office with a door resort to taking a breast pump into a closet or bathroom stall.

Pregnancy discrimination in higher education persists in the form of subtle stereotypes of academic mothers being less committed to scholarship. The American Association of University Women Educational Foundation and the American Association of University Women Legal Advocacy Fund (2004) noted two key cases related to pregnancy discrimination. In *Crystal v. Regents of the University of Michigan*, Jill Crystal, a former assistant professor of political science, alleged that the university retaliated against her during her tenure review process because she had challenged the university's pregnancy leave policy. In 1996, a court-ordered mediation panel found in Crystal's favor and awarded her \$100,000. In *Goltz v. University of Notre Dame*, Sonia Goltz, a former assistant professor in the College of Business, alleged that a hostile work environment and the inability to stop the tenure clock following childbirth affected her ability to achieve qualifications necessary for tenure. Goltz' case was settled at trial in 1998 in favor of the University of Notre Dame.

### **The Common Tick-Tock: Childbearing and the Tenure Track**

Achieving tenure is a process fraught with impediments for women who have or desire children. Typically, women's tenure clock and biological clock tick in unison. If women have children before earning tenure, their tenure bids may be jeopardized; conversely, if women choose to earn tenure before having children, their biological clock may stop ticking before tenure is granted. Women who desire both career and family make a variety of decisions related to childbearing. Some women choose to have children pre-tenure despite the risks to their careers; others take their chances with biology and secure tenure before attempting to conceive a baby. Non-tenure-track teaching positions may be an attractive option for women who perceive

tenure-track faculty careers and children as incompatible. Research findings support the need for policies to accommodate the needs of women faculty with children in the academy and reconsideration of the traditional six-year timetable for tenure.

Finkel and Olswang (1996) sought to identify factors that women perceived as impediments to tenure. An original survey was developed by Finkel and Olswang and completed by 124 women tenure-track assistant professors at a large, public research university. Over 44% of the women assistant professors surveyed had no children, including over one third of the total who were married or in permanent relationships. Of the 30% of women who reported that they had decided never to have children, nearly half (46%) reported that their decision to remain childless was influenced “significantly or a great deal” (p. 129) by their career goals. Of the 49% of women who acknowledged postponing having a child, 34% reported that their careers influenced their decision to wait. Over 40% of women surveyed perceived “time required by children” (p. 130) as a “serious” (p. 130) impediment to achieving tenure. Among women with children, the percentage of assistant professors who rated “time required by children” (p. 130) as a serious impediment to tenure rose to 59 %. When the responses of women with at least one child under age six were examined separately, the percentage of women who reported “time required by children” (p. 130) to be a serious threat to tenure skyrocketed to 82%.

Research by Mason and Goulden (2002) indicated that women’s perception of children as an impediment to tenure is a realistic concern. Using 1973 to 1999 data from the Survey of Doctorate Recipients (SDR), a biennial longitudinal study sponsored by the National Science Foundation and other government agencies, Mason and Goulden investigated the effect of the workplace structure in academia on families with children and poignantly titled their study “Do

Babies Matter?” In answer to the title of the study, Mason and Goulden concluded, “Our findings illustrate, not surprisingly, that babies do matter—they matter a great deal. And what also matters is the timing of the babies” (p. 24). Mason and Goulden found a consistent significant gap in achieving tenure between women who have “early babies” (p. 24)—defined as a baby born within the first five years of a parent completing a Ph.D.—and men who have early babies. Among academics in science and engineering, men with early babies were 24% more likely than women with early babies to have achieved tenure 12 to 14 years after completing the Ph.D. Similarly, men with early babies in the humanities and social sciences were nearly 20% more likely than women with early babies to have achieved tenure 12 to 14 years after completion of the Ph.D. Interestingly, men who had early babies achieved tenure at *slightly higher rates* than faculty who did not have early babies. In a survey of more than 800 post-doctoral fellows at Berkeley in 2000, 59% of married women with children indicated that they were considering leaving academia. Mason and Goulden recommended that institutions consider the needs of women with young children. They wrote, “Raising children takes time and only an accommodation to that basic fact can ultimately allow women to achieve in their career goals” (p. 26).

In a follow-up study to the “Do Babies Matter?” project, Mason and Goulden (2004) examined the experiences of men and women who secured their first assistant professor job before becoming parents. Did they still have a baby? Mason and Goulden wrote, “The short answer: men do, but women don’t” (p. 11). As in their first study, the authors analyzed data from the Survey of Doctorate Recipients. The results were sobering for women. Mason and Goulden found that only one in three women who took a “fast-track university job” (p. 12) before having a child ever became a mother. Women who achieved tenure were more than twice

as likely as men who achieved tenure to be single 12 years after completing a Ph.D. Women who were married when they began their faculty careers were “much more likely” (p. 12) than their male counterparts to be divorced or separated from their spouse. Interestingly, women in a “second tier” (p. 12) of Ph.D.’s—women who were not working or who were adjunct or part-time scholars—experienced marital stability and had babies at a rate very similar to men who became professors. When examining gender equity in higher education, Mason and Goulden advocated that the “baby gap” (p. 14) be considered:

We need to ask not only how many women are professors and deans relative to their male counterparts; we also need to ask how many women with children are in high places compared with men with children. Viewing the situation in this way reveals that women have much further to go than would otherwise be evident. (p. 14)

For some women who perceive tenured faculty careers and children to be incompatible, non-tenure-track teaching positions are feasible opportunities to remain in academia while raising a family. Harper, Baldwin, Gansneder, and Chronister (2001) conducted a two-year study of full-time, non-tenure-track instructional faculty at four-year institutions utilizing data from the 1993 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF-93) compiled by the National Center for Education Statistics. Data from the NSOPF-93 were supplemented by an institutional survey of 89 colleges and universities, visits to 12 campuses, and interviews with approximately 385 people over a one-year time period. Throughout interviews, it was clear that some non-tenure-track women faculty considered a tenured faculty career and motherhood to be irreconcilable. At a liberal arts college, a non-tenure-track lecturer admitted, “My game plan changed when I had kids” (p. 244). A lecturer at a research university shared that she resigned from a tenured position at another institution in order to work part-time and be more available to

her young children. A non-tenure-track faculty member at a doctoral institution explained that she consciously chose not to pursue a tenure-track position because of her family situation; as a single mother with two young children, there was “no way” (p. 244) that she could produce the research required by the university and “have a life” (p. 244).

The phenomenon of childbearing/childrearing as an impediment to tenure is not unique to the United States. Armenti (2004) examined the decisions made by Canadian women professors regarding the pursuit of tenure and childbearing/childrearing. Nineteen women, all of whom had children or were planning to have children, were interviewed at one Canadian university in 1996. Armenti found what she termed the “hidden pregnancy phenomenon” (p. 219). While older women in the study described attempts to plan births for May, younger women argued that it was best not to have children prior to tenure. Both generations of women were “hiding their maternal desires to meet an unwritten professional standard that is geared toward the male life course” (p. 219). Additionally, Armenti found that young women in the study—like the generation of women before them—continued to hide pregnancies during job interviews.

### **Work/Life Policies in Academia**

As colleges and universities have recognized the struggle of parents in academia, some have established work/life policies as a form of support to families. The details of work/life policies differ for each institution, but policies may include benefits such as paid leave, extended unpaid leave, and tenure extensions. Research indicates that the existence of work/life policies does not guarantee encouragement or use of the offered benefits.

As universities began to develop and revise policies to assist faculty members who became parents, Finkel, Olswang, and She (1994) investigated what faculty members wanted or deemed appropriate in policy and practice. Specifically, they sought to determine whether

maternity and tenure probationary policies at a major research university helped relieve the challenges faced by women faculty in attaining tenured positions and in advancing to senior faculty status. The study was conducted at a large, public research university. The university offered a 90-day paid sick leave allowance for faculty women who gave birth and the option of unpaid leave for up to one year following the birth. One-year tenure extensions were offered to new mothers who were on leave for six months.

The survey results of Finkel et al. (1994) indicated a “glaring disparity between what faculty believe and what faculty do concerning the critical issue of caring for infants” (p. 267). An overwhelming majority of the faculty felt that women faculty should have paid leaves for childbirth recovery and newborn care (75%) and unpaid leaves for continuing infant care after using all available paid leave (95.7%). More than four-fifths (83.4%) of respondents favored stopping the tenure clock for a full year for faculty members who took an infant care leave. Although respondents firmly supported policies to support childbearing/childrearing, 70% of respondents perceived that utilizing such policies would hurt them professionally. Fifty-six percent of respondents reported that they would be pressured by their departments to return to work after the birth of an infant, despite the leaves that institutional policies may offer. Of the respondents who had given birth while at the university, only 30% took the full amount of paid time off allowed by institutional policy. Thirty percent took less paid leave than university policy offered; forty percent took no paid leave at all. A meager 5.9% of the faculty took the unpaid leave after the exhaustion of paid leave. When asked whether they would take a three-month leave “if their same sex colleagues did the same when they had a child,” 70.5% of the faculty (75.6% of the women and 68.4% of the men) indicated that they would do so. As Finkel



et al. concluded, “The implications of parenthood on work productivity is minimally recognized in policy and ignored by many in practice” (p. 268).

Like Finkel et al., Wolf-Wendel and Ward (2006) conducted a study to understand the perceptions of work/life policies by faculty members. Wolf-Wendel and Ward interviewed 117 women assistant professors with children aged 0 to 5 years. Participants were from research universities, comprehensive/regional institutions, liberal arts colleges, and community colleges, with about 30 participants from each institutional type. The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) was mentioned on all campuses and was the primary focus of most institutional policies. By law, the FMLA allows 12 weeks of unpaid leave without jeopardizing one’s job for the birth of a child. Across institutional types, faculty members felt that they were responsible for negotiating solutions to their own maternity needs (e.g., arranging leave with the department head, finding a substitute for classes, stopping the tenure clock, etc.). Additionally, fear and concern about ramifications of taking available leaves were prevalent across all institutions. Wolf-Wendel and Ward wrote, “There was universal concern about how using policies like parental leave would be perceived by colleagues and the ultimate effect taking a leave would have on tenure decisions” (p. 55). Although 37 participants were employed by institutions that permitted stopping the tenure clock for the birth of a baby, only 9 chose to do so. One faculty member at a research university explained the difficulty of ensuring that stopping the tenure clock does not jeopardize a professor’s tenure bid:

It is sort of your time management problem—if you want to take three months off to stay at home with your baby that’s fine but down the road, you can’t say, “I spent time with my kids and I only published four papers.” (p. 57)

Wolf-Wendel and Ward (2006) found that newly hired, untenured, women faculty members who are unfamiliar with the culture of the institution may be particularly vulnerable. A participant in Wolf-Wendel and Ward's study who gave birth to a baby during her first semester of a new faculty job described her inability to develop a reasonable plan for maternity:

I asked about maternity leave and was told there is no maternity leave here [for newly hired faculty]. . . . I started right in when the semester started and then three weeks later, on September 22, I had the baby. I had the baby on Friday and so I had my classes that week on Tuesday and Wednesday online and then I was back in the classroom the next week. (p. 59)

### **Managing Faculty and Family Roles in Academia**

Because both academic careers and children are greedy, faculty members must find ways to manage their dual roles. A study by Colbeck (2006) indicated that women faculty members maintained stricter boundaries between their work and family lives than men faculty. Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004) found that women coped by adopting the art of "satisficing" (p. 249); participants adopted a realistic perspective of what was possible to achieve each day.

Colbeck's (2006) study used a qualitative approach to investigate the integration of work life and personal life for tenure-track faculty at research universities. Colbeck observed 13 faculty members (7 women and 6 men) from two research universities. Six faculty members were from the English department, and seven taught in the chemistry or chemistry-related department. Data collection included an initial interview, three nonconsecutive days of shadowing participants from the time they left for work until the early evening hours, and a final interview.

Colbeck (2006) found that women maintained stronger boundaries around both their work and home domains. Women spent 4.5% of their time on campus engaged in activities that were purely personal or that integrated work and personal roles; in contrast, men spent 6.8% of their time on campus meeting personal goals or integrating work and personal goals. At home, men faculty allowed work activities to interrupt 2.5 times more often than did women faculty.

Comments by two participants in Colbeck's (2006) study illustrated the difference between work and home boundaries for men and women faculty. Both Laurel Sun and Jim Shevrelle were associate professors of English, parents of preschoolers, and married to individuals with full-time professional careers. During an interview, Sun explained that her young family demanded her full attention, making work at home nearly impossible. Sun shared, "When I'm at home either with them wholly or even with my husband, there is no way [the children] will not come seek me out and seek my attention and that goes for my husband as well" (p. 43). By contrast, Shevrelle described how he sits down at home to send out email messages to committee members. Shevrelle said, "I never really feel like okay, I'm home now, I'm done with work" (p. 43).

Colbeck (2006) found that more women than men participants were satisfied with their allocation of work and home activities. Participants were asked to draw pictures of their actual and ideal time allocation and integration of activities involving work, family, self, and community activities. Three of the seven women participants felt that their current situation was close to ideal; four of the women indicated that they would maintain approximately the same allocation of time to work and home activities but preferably integrate them more. Only one of the men indicated that his actual allocation of time was ideal. Three of the men indicated that

they would ideally like to devote more time to family and less time to work, and two of the men indicated a desire to be more involved in the community.

In a qualitative study involving 29 women purposefully selected from nine different research universities, Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004) discovered the coping skill of “satisficing” (p. 249). All of the women were assistant professors on the tenure track who had children between birth and age five or associate professors promoted within the past year who had children in the same age range. These academic mothers recognized the limitations of their time, energy, and resources and accepted the reality that they could not do their best all the time. They learned to be content with “good enough” (p. 250). Some women described compromising on the overall level of scholarship that they produced, the venues in which they published, and the level of distinction that they were going to achieve as academics; others admitted satisficing on teaching and service responsibilities in order to produce stellar research. Although most participants had been high achievers throughout their lives and expressed some discomfort with not performing to the best of their abilities, they also recognized that some things were worth the sacrifice. One participant explained, “I would like my son to be my highest priority. . . . I try really hard to keep it balanced, and that’s why I made this decision to crank out an average amount of research and not really excel” (p. 250). A second participant agreed, “I think I do a good job, though I am not going the extra [mile] to publish tons of papers. I am not going to be a star in the field because I do not have the time” (p. 250).

Academic mothers in Ward and Wolf-Wendel’s (2004) study made it clear that the balance between work and family was “delicate” (p. 254), but they also stressed that the dual roles were possible and fulfilling. Ward and Wolf-Wendel summarized the way that the personal and professional roles of academic mothers were complimentary:

As professional women, the academic accomplishments of these women buffered them from consuming stresses at home. They repeatedly mentioned the gratification of getting published and being recognized in their fields; these achievements put their children's temper tantrums and household chores into perspective. In turn, the presence of a child buffered women from the harsh realities at work. This was particularly clear for the three women in this study who were denied tenure at earlier points in their careers. Having a child immediately put this check to their careers in perspective and protected their self-esteem. (pp. 253-254)

### **Summary of Literature Review**

In some ways, higher education has come so far since Abigail Adams pled with her husband to consider the importance of educated women in the new republic (Butterfield, 1963) and the young, gifted Lucinda Foote was turned away from Yale University because of her gender (Woody, 1966); in other ways, however, higher education has a long way to go to fully achieve equity for women in senior faculty positions. Society now recognizes that higher learning will not destroy the ability of women to reproduce, nor will it confine women to the life of "neuralgia, uterine disease, hysteria, and other derangements of the nervous system" which Dr. Edward Clark proposed (as cited in Solomon, 1985, p. 56). Yet, academia continues to socialize women faculty to behave like men. As Marcus (2007) indicated, the timing and requirements of the tenure process make it difficult for women faculty to raise families and push some women who desire motherhood away from the academy. Although work/life policies may serve as a form of support for academic families, they will only do so to the extent to which the use of such policies is embraced and supported by the culture of the institution (Finkel et al., 1994; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006). In an effort to manage their dual roles as faculty and

mothers, women may erect tight boundaries around their work and home lives (Colbeck, 2006) or force themselves to accept that they will not be able to give 100% of themselves to everything that they do (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004).

An appreciation of diversity in the academy should include an appreciation of the inclusion of faculty who are parents. In order for colleges and universities to recruit and retain talented women professors with children, the academy must listen and respond to the unique needs of academic mothers. The following chapter explains the methods utilized in this study to hear and understand the personal and professional realities of women on the tenure track with children.

## CHAPTER 3

### **Research Methodology**

This chapter describes the design and methodology of this study of the lived experiences of women on the tenure track with children. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, eight women faculty with children under the age of 18 were purposefully selected to participate in face to face interviews lasting 60 to 120 minutes. Participants had completed at least their third year pre-tenure review and were no more than three years post tenure. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed into computer files. Member checking and peer debriefing were conducted to verify the accuracy of my analysis of the data. To ensure the protection of human subjects, this study was reviewed and approved by the Indiana State University Institutional Review Board, as well as by the Institutional Review Board at each of the three institutions from which participants were drawn. Written permission was obtained from all participants prior to interviews, and participants were reminded that they may voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time.

### **Qualitative Design**

This study utilized qualitative design. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative researchers study things in their natural environments, transforming those settings into a series of field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. Qualitative researchers are interested in how individuals make sense of their experiences in

the world (Merriam, 1998). Through observation and in-depth interviewing, qualitative researchers “get closer” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 12) to participant’s perspectives and are able to record rich descriptions of social phenomena. This qualitative study listened deeply to and richly described the voices of women on the tenure track with children.

### **Phenomenology**

As a tradition of qualitative research, phenomenology describes the meaning that several individuals make of their lived experiences of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). According to Patton (2002), the underlying assumption of qualitative research is that there is an essence to shared experience. When the experiences of different people experiencing a common phenomenon are analyzed, mutual understandings, or essences, can be identified. Qualitative researchers identify a phenomenon, collect data from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon, and develop a description of the essence of those shared experiences (Creswell, 2007).

While conducting a phenomenological study, the researcher becomes personally attached to the phenomenon. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) explained, “The researcher is intimately connected with the phenomenon being studied and comes to know himself within his experiencing of these phenomenon” (p. 481).

This phenomenological study examined the lived experiences of women on the tenure track with children. The phenomenon of mothering while pursuing tenure was described.

### **Researcher Role**

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) compared a qualitative researcher to a quilt maker. They wrote, “The quilter stitches, edits, and puts slices of reality together. This process creates and brings psychological and emotional unity—a pattern—to an interpretive experience” (p. 5). As



qualitative researchers bind together pieces of participants' lived experiences, they must also engage in reflexivity, critical reflection on their own experiences. Researchers engage in critical reflection on their choice of research topic, their selection of participants, and the impact of their own identities in the research setting (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

As a researcher engaged in listening to the voices of women tenure-track faculty with children, my own reflexivity began by recognizing that I have much in common with the women whose voices I desired to hear. Most importantly, like the participants in this study, I am a mother. I am also preparing for a career in the academy.

**Ensuring trustworthiness of the data.** I understand that my identity as a mother in higher education influenced my choice of research problem and my selection of participants. Inevitably, I brought part of myself to this study, and I further learned about myself by listening to the voices of the participants. Because of this reality, I was mindful of my responsibility to minimize my influence on participants' responses to interview questions. As Guba and Lincoln (2005) suggested, I questioned myself regarding my interactions with respondents, in "who [I] became to them in the process of *becoming* to [myself]" (p. 210). Guba and Lincoln suggested that the process of writing research is a process of discovery, "discovery of the subject (and sometimes of the problem itself) and discovery of the self" (p. 210). I differentiated between those discoveries as I wrote so that the quilt that was tied together through this research study represents the voices of the participating women faculty with children.

## **Participants**

Eight women faculty with children under age 18 were purposefully selected for this study. Purposeful sampling allowed me to seek out "information-rich key informants" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 401), resulting in samples that were likely to be informative

about the phenomenon being investigated. Participants had completed at least their third year pre-tenure review and were no more than three years post tenure. To aim for maximum variation (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002), participants were drawn from three Midwestern universities—one master’s university, one research university with high research activity, and one research university with very high research activity.

### **Data Collection**

To elicit data about participants’ experiences as mothers on the tenure track, face to face interviews lasting 60 to 120 minutes were conducted with each participant. Each interview was conducted at a location chosen by the participant. Interviews are important to learn information that cannot be observed—information such as feelings, thoughts, intentions, and experiences that took place during an earlier point in time (Patton, 2002). Patton wrote, “The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective” (p. 341). Weiss (1994) described how interviewing allows researchers to learn about people’s inner experiences. According to Weiss, “We can learn the meanings to them of their relationships, their families, their work, and their selves. We can learn about all the experiences, from joy through grief, that together constitute the human condition” (p. 1).

Interviews were semi-structured in nature, guided by a list of questions to be explored (Appendix B). The exact wording of the questions and the order of the questions varied from participant to participant. Merriam (1998) explained, “This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (p. 74).

**Data Analysis**

Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed into computer files to preserve all verbal information. Backup copies of the computer files were developed (Creswell, 2007).

The multi-step method of phenomenological data analysis suggested by Creswell (2007) was followed for transcript analysis. After bracketing my own personal experiences so that the focus was on the participants in the study, a list of significant statements was developed regarding how participants experienced the phenomenon under investigation. Significant statements were grouped according to themes. A composite description of the essence of the participants' shared experiences was written by joining together a description of what participants experienced as mothers in the academy and how they experienced it.

**Data Verification**

Member checking was used to solicit participants' views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations of the study (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998). According to Merriam, member checking involves "taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible" (p. 204). A copy of the transcript of each participant's interview was given to the participant for review. If requested by a participant, I corresponded with the participant to clarify understanding or gain deeper insight into the participant's experiences. Additionally, a peer debriefer reviewed my analyses of the transcripts and posed questions regarding methodology and interpretations (Creswell, 2007).

**Human Subjects**

A proposal of this research study was approved by Indiana State University's Institutional Review Board. This campus committee reviewed the research proposal to ensure that the study

did not pose potential risks or harm to participants. The research proposal was also approved by the Institutional Review Board at each of the institutions from which participants were drawn.

Participants' written permission to be studied was gained before interviews commenced (Creswell, 2007). As suggested by Creswell, the informed consent form (Appendix A) included the right of participants to voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time, the purpose of the study and data collection procedures, an explanation of how participant confidentiality would be protected, and an explanation of potential risks or benefits associated with participation in the study. I answered any questions that arose regarding the consent form. When participants were willing to agree to what was stated in the consent form and continue with the interview, they signed the form and returned it to me.

### **Summary of Study Design and Methodology**

The lived experiences of eight women assistant professors or recently tenured associate professors with children were listened to, recorded, analyzed, and verified through phenomenological qualitative research design. Through face to face interviews, I learned the meanings that academic mothers make of their relationships, families, work, and selves (Weiss, 1994). Understanding the experiences of women on the tenure track with children and the meaning that such women make of those experiences allows colleges and universities to develop a culture which supports the needs of this population of faculty. The following chapter introduces the participants of this study and their experiences as mothers on the tenure track.

## CHAPTER 4

### **Participant Stories**

The purpose of this study was to seek an understanding of the personal and professional experiences of women faculty on the tenure track with children. Using the words and descriptions of the participants, this chapter offers an account of the journey of each of the eight participants to and through the tenure track. Each story is as unique as the woman who shared it, but all are joined together by the common experience of mothering on the tenure track. As outlined in Table 1, the professional demographics of the participants varied by institution, institutional type, academic rank, and academic field. Table 2 indicates how the personal demographics of the participants varied by relationship status, number of children, age of children, and ethnicity/nationality. Each participant's story is separated into three time periods: becoming a terminal degree holder, becoming a mother, and becoming a professor. The sequence of these time periods varied by participant, and the time periods were not always mutually exclusive.

Table 1

*Professional Demographics of Participants*

| Pseudonym | Institution              | Institutional Type               | Academic Rank       | Academic Field          |
|-----------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Allie     | Prairie University       | Master's                         | Associate Professor | Biological Sciences     |
| Kay       | Prairie University       | Master's                         | Assistant Professor | Mathematics             |
| Sally     | Prairie University       | Master's                         | Associate Professor | Physical Education      |
| Emily     | Prairie University       | Master's                         | Associate Professor | Athletic Training       |
| Greta     | Prairie University       | Master's                         | Assistant Professor | Counseling              |
| Sadie     | Rolling Hills University | Research with High Activity      | Assistant Professor | College Student Affairs |
| Sarah     | City University          | Research with Very High Activity | Associate Professor | Sociology               |
| Ayana     | City University          | Research with Very High Activity | Assistant Professor | History                 |

**Institutional Description**

Participants for this study were drawn from three distinctly different universities. Prairie University, a master's university according to the Carnegie Classification System, is a mid-sized public liberal arts university located in a small rural community. Rolling Hills University is a mid-sized public research university with high research activity located in a small rural

community. City University is a large public research university with very high research activity located approximately 50 miles from a major metropolitan area.

Table 2

*Personal Demographics of Participants*

| Pseudonym | Relationship Status | Child/Children<br>(Age/Ages)                          | Ethnicity/<br>Nationality |
|-----------|---------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Allie     | Married             | Son (5 yrs.)  | White                     |
| Kay       | Commuter Marriage   | Daughter (7 yrs.)<br>Daughter (5 yrs.)                | South Korean              |
| Sally     | Married             | Daughter (7 yrs.)<br>Son (5 yrs.)<br>Daughter (1 yr.) | White                     |
| Emily     | Married             | Son (8 yrs.)<br>Daughter (7 yrs.)<br>Son (2 yrs.)     | White                     |
| Greta     | Married             | Son (4 yrs.)<br>Son (3 yrs.)<br>Daughter (1 yr.)      | White                     |
| Sadie     | Partner (Same sex)  | Daughter (1 yr.)                                      | White                     |
| Sarah     | Married / Separated | Son (13 yrs.)   | White                     |
| Ayana     | Single              | Daughter (16 yrs.)                                    | African American          |

**Allie's Story**

Allie is an associate professor of biological sciences at Prairie University. Her tenure was effective Fall 2009. Allie's husband teaches in the same academic department, and the couple share adjoining offices. Allie has one child, a son, who celebrated his fifth birthday three days after our interview. Prior to joining the faculty at Prairie University, Allie and her husband

taught at a Western research university for two years. Allie applied those two years of experience to her tenure clock at Prairie University, allowing her to become tenured after only four years at the university. Prior to entering academia, Allie and her husband worked at a federal ecology laboratory; they continue to participate in research activities at that lab during summers. Allie is White.

As I prepared for my interview with Allie, a photo on her webpage caught my attention. According to its caption, the photo was taken while Allie enjoyed a break with her son from her summer teaching and research activities in Southern estuaries. Allie's son, who was probably about a year old when the photo was taken, was dressed in a bright red shirt, seated in a highchair, and gazing contentedly at the photographer. Allie was crouched beside the highchair, her head close to her son's, smiling happily. When I saw the photo and read the caption, I thought to myself, "That photo seems to tell a story of someone who has managed to find balance between faculty life and motherhood."

As I listened to Allie, I realized that she had indeed found the sense of balance which radiated from the photo on her website. Allie repeatedly articulated that her son was the very reason why she was teaching at Prairie University, rather than pursuing a career at a research university. As Allie explained, "You are going to have to make some sacrifices down the line here and there, but you can't sacrifice your family. That is why you are here." Allie's ability to manage work and family was facilitated by the large amount of data which she accumulated while working at the ecology lab. Allie shared, "I could not go after another piece of data for the rest of my life and still be able to publish with the amount of data sets that I have."

Some of Allie's sacrifices were evident during our interview. As I entered the building in which she teaches, my senses were bombarded by a pungent odor which permeated the building.



It was a powerful smell that I vaguely remember from high school science labs but can no longer specifically identify. It was clear that the building was in dire need of a new ventilation system. Some of the ceiling tiles in Allie's office were stained by dark rust, and she worked at a desk that she had brought to the office from her home. It was the very desk at which she had nursed her newborn son while typing publications five years earlier.

In return for those sacrifices, Allie is able to establish a teaching schedule that revolves around her son, enjoy weekends and evenings with her family, and work with colleagues who are supportive of the needs of working parents. Allie described an event which embodied the advantages of a career at Prairie University:

Something happened that my son needed a remedy—this is where it hit home that I was in a good place for having a family. I called the daycare and asked when my son would be going down for a nap. They said that naptime would be in about 15 minutes. I went home and got the remedy, took it to the daycare, and drove back to campus. I did the full loop in about 20 minutes. There are not many other places where you are going to be able to do that. That is the quality of it.

**Becoming a professor—“I think it just sort of happened.”** When asked what led her to become a university professor, Allie shared, “I think it just sort of happened. It certainly was not my intention as an undergraduate, although I kind of entertained it back and forth.” As Allie embarked on her undergraduate degree program in wildlife ecology, her goal was to become a park ranger. More than anything, she wanted to work outdoors. As Allie progressed in her coursework, she got more involved in science and started doing research with her academic advisors. When she went on to pursue a master's degree, Allie was employed as a teaching assistant. At that point, she began thinking that she might like to be a professor. After

completing her master's degree, Allie was hired by the United States Department of Energy to work at a federal river ecology laboratory. Allie's work at the ecology lab fully engaged her in research and led her to pursue a Ph.D. so that she could advance in the field. Allie described her decision to enroll in a Ph.D. program:

I started working at the river site with just a master's. It was 100% research, and it was very applied research in terms of problem solving skills. I was happy, but I hit a glass ceiling financially. I was doing most of the work, but other people were making a lot more money. I was publishing. I knew that I was going to have to get that membership card of the Ph.D. at some point.

Allie did not earn a Ph.D. specifically because she wanted to be a professor, but rather because she wanted to “be part of the game” at the ecology lab.

**Becoming a terminal degree holder—“It was pretty stressful, but it was only two years.”** Allie met her husband while working at the ecology lab. Like Allie, he was also a technician. The two lived together for several years and then, as Allie put it, “just kind of got married along the way.” Allie's husband had finished Ph.D. coursework, passed oral and written examinations, and began a dissertation before the couple met. Progress on his dissertation had come to a halt when “something with the project went bad,” and he decided to stay at the ecology lab as a technician. By the time Allie met her husband, the stress related to his Ph.D. program had mostly passed. Allie explained, “It was pretty much like, ‘Just finish this damn dissertation!’”

While her husband finished his dissertation, Allie completed a Ph.D. program in two years. She worked full-time at the ecology lab, commuted to campus for classes, and mentored master's students in her lab. Because Allie had been doing so much research for her job at the

ecology lab, she essentially only needed to do coursework to complete the degree program; this enabled her to graduate in two years. Describing those two years, Allie said, “Yeah, it was pretty stressful, but it was only two years.”

**Becoming a mom—“I’m done trapping alligators and going on an airboat.”** After finishing their Ph.D.s, Allie and her husband knew that their ecology lab’s funding was in jeopardy due to the federal government’s fiscal challenges. Allie explained:

When you work in these types of situations, you are always waiting on those Congressional mandates. You are always waiting for that budget to come down. So even though we had just finished our Ph.D.s and there were opportunities to stay at that laboratory, we did not want that sort of life anymore.

At that time, the challenge of finding two tenure-track faculty positions began. A set of thick curriculum vitas from working at a world-renowned ecology lab facilitated the couple’s search for positions in academia and enabled them to land two positions in the same department at a Western research university. Very quickly after their arrival at that institution, Allie learned that she was pregnant with her son. According to Allie, “I think I was there about a week before I got pregnant!” When asked if the timing of her son’s birth was planned, Allie candidly explained that the timing of her pregnancy was part of her progression through normal life stages:

It wasn’t like I was thinking, “I won’t have a baby until this time.” It was more like, “Okay, I’m done trapping alligators and going on an airboat.” It was just a normal progression through life. It was time to put the guns down and quit playing with radionucleides.

Age heavily influenced Allie's decision to have a baby as she was entering a career in academia. Allie and her husband began trying to have a baby when Allie was about 31 years old, and their son was born when she was 33. Allie explained her understanding of her biological clock:

It was the alarm clock going off more than anything else. But that was also because of going through the different stages in life. I had postponed it, postponed it, postponed it, because there were other things going on. . . . I realized that I was 30 and that we needed to start trying to conceive if we were going to have a child.

### **Kay's Story**

Allie introduced me to Kay, an assistant professor of mathematics at Prairie University. Kay has completed her fifth year on the tenure track, but she will not go up for tenure in 2009-2010. Instead, she will be taking a one year unpaid leave of absence so that she and her two daughters can move to the East Coast to live with her husband. Kay's husband, a medical doctor with a specialty in pathology, has been living on the East Coast for two years. During those two years, Kay and her daughters have been living near Prairie University, more than 700 miles from her husband. Kay's older daughter is seven years old, and her younger daughter celebrated her fifth birthday four days after our interview. Kay's family was scheduled to move the day after her daughter's birthday.

In response to a couple of interview questions, Kay referred to her husband as "a very traditional Korean man." Born and raised in South Korea, Kay and her husband met as undergraduate students at Jeonbuk National University. Jeonbuk is a province on the southwest side of the Korean peninsula. When I asked Kay what it meant to be a traditional Korean man, she explained, "Taking care of responsibilities inside the family is the wife's responsibility."

Kay shared that she has asked some of her American friends about their roles in their families and how they divide work at home with their husbands. She said, “As I hear more and more about it, I feel like there is no way that I can ask these things of my husband.” Traditional Korean beliefs also assert that the career of Kay’s husband is most important for their family. Kay explained her family’s understanding of her professional aspirations:

[My husband] understands that this is very important to me, but, at the same time, my career here is still the second priority. I feel the same way. In some sense, I feel like I want my husband to be able to do what he wants with his career, and I hope that I will be able to do what I would like to do as well.

Kay’s office phone rang twice during our interview. Noting the number on the caller identification window of her telephone, she answered both times and immediately began speaking Korean. The first caller was Kay’s husband, calling from the East Coast to check on the progress of the family’s move. The second caller was one of Kay’s graduate school classmates, a gentleman who is now a professor of math education at Seoul National University. Kay’s former classmate was calling from Seoul to tell Kay that his daughter would be enrolling as an undergraduate student at a university on the East Coast. Kay was very happy about the prospect of being able to help this friend’s daughter move and become acclimated to life in the United States.

As Kay spoke with her husband and former classmate, I had a chance to notice that her office showed no signs of an impending move. Her textbooks and journals were still in place on the bookshelf. Photos of her daughters and husband warmed the wall space just above the surface of her desk. A bulletin board by the door was covered with personal messages and emails, one of which was an email message to Kay’s colleagues announcing the birth of her

second daughter. The condition of Kay's office suggested that she intended to return to Prairie University at the end of the year to complete the tenure track and continue teaching.

As I listened to Kay talk about moving to the East Coast, I sensed that she was struggling with this junction in her family's life. On one hand, she was certainly eager for her daughters to reconnect with their father on a deeper level:

One thing that made me decide to take the leave this year was that I felt a big difference in my children's response to their father. The first year, they were always asking when Daddy was coming. They would ask when they would be able to see Daddy. During the second year, they didn't ask much about him. We felt like the children were starting to believe that this was a natural process. That is fine—we don't want them to feel uncomfortable. At the same time, my husband and I felt very sorry that he was not able to be close to the children.

On the other hand, Kay expressed disappointment that she was not able to experience professional challenges at the same level as her husband. After describing herself as an ambitious undergraduate, Kay continued, "He has been very lucky to be in a very challenging environment. It is a pleasure to see him grow, but sometimes I feel like I am not doing as well as he is doing."

At the time of our interview, Kay had not found any teaching opportunities in the vicinity of her family's new home. She was uncertain about her professional future, but hopeful that it would still include a tenure-track faculty position. Kay explained her connection to academia:

If opportunities are given wherever my family is, I think I prefer working. I don't think I'll be happy just being a stay-at-home mom. I cannot picture myself as a stay-at-home mom. I started my undergraduate studies in 1991. Since then, academia has been part of

my life. No matter how difficult the environment was, I was able to manage. I was able to see the difference in academia between tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty. I think that I would like to prefer to keep this level of position.

Kay's uncertainty about this stage of her professional life was clear when I asked her if she would consider returning to Prairie University if her husband was unable to return with the family. Kay's inner struggle was evident in her response:

I really don't know. I want to be a responsible person. The chair here is an extremely nice person. I really get along with him very well. He has done everything that he could for me. My husband has told me that no other chair will do this much for me. For some reason, I feel like this is the place where I can do my job very well. The work that is expected fits me. I'm very scared if I will be able to find another place which is like this.

**Becoming a terminal degree holder—“He encouraged me to think about going to school outside of our own country.”** As a child, Kay always wanted to be a middle school or high school math teacher. She envisioned herself returning to teach math at the high school which she attended. Though Kay's high school principal tried to prevent her from applying to Jeonbuk National University, her high school math teacher convinced the principal otherwise:

Typically, at my school, students who could went to college in Seoul, the capital. My sister did that. But, I chose not to go to school in Seoul. Instead, I went to Jeonbuk National University. I knew what I wanted to do. I wanted to be a high school math teacher. I did not need to go to Seoul for that. But the schools compete against each other. They collect data on which students go to the best universities and things like that. My principal was not going to allow me to apply to Jeonbuk National University. He said that it was not best for me. But, my teacher, who knew me, told the principal that I

needed to go to Jeonbuk National. This teacher had taught me for three years, and he knew that I would be a good math teacher and might return to the high school.

Kay continues to communicate with that high school math teacher who was so influential in her life.

Ironically, while enrolled as an undergraduate student in the mathematics education program at Jeonbuk National University, Kay met another faculty mentor who advised her to apply for a graduate program in the United States:

One of my professors always encouraged me to do something different from teaching in a K-12 classroom. I really enjoyed teaching in the classroom, but he encouraged me to think about going to school outside of our own country.

Following her mentor's advice, Kay traveled to the United States in 1995 and spent five years earning a master's degree and Ph.D. in mathematics education at a Southern research university. Kay was the first graduate of Jeonbuk National University to earn a degree in math education from the United States, and she was hired to teach at the university when she returned home. As she began teaching at Jeonbuk National University, Kay had no thoughts of returning to the United States.

A month after returning home to South Korea with her Ph.D., Kay and her husband were married. After meeting Kay as an undergraduate, her husband encouraged her to pursue a graduate education, despite the distance that would separate them for five years:

He gave me a lot of support when I was preparing to come to the United States for graduate studies. He told me that he would be in full support of whatever I wanted to do. He waited for me for the five years that I was here in the United States for graduate school.



Throughout those five years, Kay only returned home for a couple of summers.

**Becoming a mom—“I am so glad that we have our daughters!”** Kay’s husband’s career led the couple back to the United States. They lived in a large metropolitan Midwestern city where her husband was employed as a researcher at an elite children’s hospital and Kay pursued post-doctoral studies at a research university. Kay’s post-doctoral studies focused on collaborative work to promote the professional development of teachers of mathematics and science. She visited numerous classrooms and schools and worked with the National Science Foundation to develop a mathematics curriculum for girls at the middle school level. Kay’s oldest daughter was born during this time. According to Kay, conveniently living just a couple of blocks from her office allowed her to juggle motherhood and graduate studies.

Continuing to follow her husband’s medical career, Kay’s family moved seven hours south to another metropolitan Midwestern city when her oldest daughter was two years old. At the time of the move, Kay was pregnant with her second daughter. Kay’s second daughter was born in June 2004, just two months before she began teaching at Prairie University, her first faculty position in the United States.

In Korean culture, having a son is important for carrying on the family line, but Kay does not feel like she can have a third baby and continue her career as a faculty member. Kay explained the likelihood that her husband will need to agree to the sacrifice of not having a son:

I am so glad that we have our daughters! But no more! [She laughs.] In our culture, you need a boy in your family. . . . But in my family, at this point, I told my husband that there is no way that I can have another child. If I have another child, I don’t think I can do this as my career. Since he is a very traditional Korean man, I think he wants to have another child. But I think he will sacrifice that. It just happened, and we had two girls!

Culturally, it is a momentous decision for a traditional Korean family to decide not to try to have a son. Kay described the impact of her husband's parents not having a grandson:

My parents-in-law would want a boy. My husband is the only boy in his family. This means a lot as a daughter-in-law! In the Old Korea, I could have been expelled from the family. They could have made me divorce. Really! In the old days, it would have been like that, but not anymore. But that is the magnitude and the significance of a son in a Korean family.

**Becoming a professor—"When everybody goes to bed, then my other life begins."**

For three years, Kay commuted two hours each way to teach at Prairie University. She left on Tuesdays between 4:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m., spent two nights at an apartment near Prairie University, and returned home on Thursday nights. Kay described the struggle of that commute:

It was very hard! We had some help from my husband's parents and a lot of babysitters. Babysitters were like our nannies. I just tried so hard to get things done when I was here so that when I went back home I could focus on my family. When I was at home, I worked when everybody went to bed. When everybody was asleep, I started my other life!

Though commuting was difficult, Kay described how it was easier than if she would have chosen to move to the rural community surrounding Prairie University with a newborn and a preschooler:

Even though I felt very guilty about leaving those little ones at home, I could focus on my work all of the time while I was here. It was very weird. Because of the long distance and the physical separation, I felt like I was two different people. I was one person, but I was doing two completely different things. I learned to switch from one to the other one.

Coming here set me in this environment so that I could focus on working. I really tried hard not to take things back home with me. There was still a lot to do at night, but I wanted to spend the weekends with the children, taking them to the zoo and things like that. On the weekends, I would do a lot of cooking so that there was food for the children for all week. I would cook traditional Korean meals for the children, at least for dinner. I would do grocery shopping and cooking on the weekends.

After Kay had been commuting to Prairie University for three years, her husband decided to accept a career opportunity on the East Coast. Initially, Kay wanted to move with him and told her department chair that she would be leaving. Kay's department chair was very supportive and wrote a letter of recommendation for her so that she could teach part-time at an institution near the family's new home. As Kay's family prepared to move, she learned that an immigration issue prevented her from leaving Prairie University. Kay's application for permanent residency was in process, and she had to remain employed by the institution that was her immigration sponsor. As a result, Kay and her daughters moved close to Prairie University while her husband moved to the East Coast.

For two years, Kay raised her daughters without the daily help of a partner. With their move to Prairie University, the environment changed significantly for Kay's daughters. The changes were especially difficult on Kay's younger daughter who was accustomed to having an adult stay at home with her during the day while her parents were gone:

When we lived in the city, we lived in a house, and the girls saw a lot of people—family, neighbors, friends. When we moved here, it was just the two girls and me. My younger daughter had to go to daycare every day. If you asked the daycare staff, they would say that my daughter was the girl who cried every day for the entire year. For the first year,

she cried every morning when I left her. It was very, very difficult. They told me that she quit crying after I left. But she cried *every day* that first year. The second year was much better. But, that first year was very, very hard.

Nodding to her office telephone, Kay admitted, “I would always call from my office to make sure that she stopped crying. My heart was breaking, but there was no way that I could do it differently.”

During these past two years, Kay spread out her teaching schedule on Mondays through Fridays from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. After 4:00 p.m., Kay went home to spend time with her daughters. After tucking her daughters into bed, Kay began reading, prepping curriculum for her classes, writing papers, and grading. Kay’s nighttime routine was scarcely different than when she was commuting. She reiterated, “Again, when everybody goes to bed, then my other life begins.”

Despite the miles separating them, Kay and her husband worked diligently to help their young daughters maintain a close relationship with their father. During extended university breaks, Kay and her daughters flew to the East Coast to spend time with her husband, but those vacations only occurred every few months. When Kay’s husband wasn’t on call at the hospital for the weekend, he flew into the closest major airport to Prairie University on Friday night. Kay and her daughters drove four hours to meet him in that city. The family would book a hotel room near the airport and spend the weekend enjoying the sites and activities of the city. Kay succinctly explained, “That is how we have managed this type of relationship.”

**Personal and professional update.** Just more than a month after our interview, Kay sent me an email message from the East Coast and updated me on her personal and professional situation. The message was very positive and upbeat, indicating that Kay had been able to find a

fulfilling balance of career and family in this new region. Still alluding to the possibility of returning to Prairie University, Kay wrote:

I am so glad that I have decided to take this year off and to spend the time with my family. We are all very happy and have been exploring the area with so much fun. . . . I have already started teaching an online math class through a different institution, part-time, of course. So, again I work once my children go to bed. I think this will benefit me in designing some of my own on-line classes for Prairie University, if needed. So, my life here is really fun both as a mom and as a mathematics educator.

### **Sally's Story**

Sally is an associate professor of physical education at Prairie University. Having earned her master's degree at Prairie University, Sally began teaching at the institution in 2001 and was tenured effective Fall 2007. Sally commutes 45 minutes each way to campus. Her husband has a demanding career in sales but was able to take care of the childcare and household responsibilities while Sally completed Ph.D. coursework during her years on the tenure track. Sally has three children—a seven-year-old daughter, a five-year-old son, and a one-year-old daughter. Sally is White.

My originally scheduled interview with Sally was cancelled when her sister delivered twin boys on that day. When we met in Sally's office a week later, she shared the exciting news about the birth of her nephews and commented on the change that occurs in a woman's life when she becomes a mother:

When you [help with other people's children] a lot, which I did before I had kids, you really think that you have a good handle on parenthood. You think, "Oh, I could do that. I know what parenting is all about, and I could really do it." It's not until you are

parenting day by day by day that you really understand it. To me, it's amazing. The development and the process that children go through and the bond that kids create with their parents is just amazing.

**Becoming a professor—“Being a professor didn’t even cross my mind.”** As an undergraduate student, Sally enrolled at a private Midwestern master’s college to study physical therapy. When she realized that she did not want to be a physical therapist, she changed her major to exercise science. Even then, Sally did not know what career path she would follow. Sally explained, “I didn’t know what I was going to do with a degree in exercise science. I just knew that I liked wellness.” As part of her exercise science program, Sally accepted an internship in the wellness department of a community hospital located less than ten miles from Prairie University. Sally spent a significant amount of time during her internship experience working with patients in a cardiac rehabilitation program, and she learned that she enjoyed working with those patients. Through her internship, Sally learned that Prairie University offered a master’s degree program in exercise science.

After graduating with her undergraduate degree, Sally enrolled in the master’s degree program in exercise science at Prairie University. Although she was a teaching assistant throughout graduate school, Sally clarified, “Being a professor didn’t even cross my mind.”

With her master’s degree in hand, Sally accepted a position in cardiac rehabilitation at the community hospital at which she had done her undergraduate internship. At the hospital, one of Sally’s major responsibilities was to teach educational units for the hospital’s cardiac rehabilitation patients. Sally said, “I really enjoyed that. It was a lot of fun.”

After working at the hospital for three years, Sally was enticed away by an opportunity to work in pharmaceutical sales. Sally explained how the salary and benefits offered by the pharmaceutical company were appealing at that stage of her life:

I had a friend that was looking for a job right out of graduate school. She went through the same graduate program that I did. She found a job working for the pharmaceutical company. The benefits that she received were unbelievable. The salary that she received was unbelievable. She had my same degree. She had a lot of flex-time. She had all of this big travel. . . . It was very alluring.

After working for the pharmaceutical company for two years, Sally realized that her career path in sales did not fit well with her personality or family plans. Sally described some of the dynamics of the job:

Physicians don't want to talk to you. They don't have time. The nursing staff is busy.

They don't want to listen to you. You have to be very aggressive. You have to try to get attention. You have to be over the top. You have to do crazy things.

Sally's work ethic propelled her to strive to be among the best in her field. As a result, she worked constantly. Sally shared, "I worked non-stop. I always wanted to have top sales, and I always wanted to be number one in my district. I worked night and day, and that's all that I ever did." During this time, Sally was struggling to conceive her first child. Hoping that she would be able to conceive, Sally knew that she did not want to continue in her pharmaceutical sales career when she had a baby:

I knew that I wanted to have a family. . . . I didn't want to do the pharmaceutical job with a child. There was too much travel, overnight travel. There were a lot of big meetings that required you to be gone for an entire week at a time. I didn't care for it.

Sally learned valuable lessons during the two years that she worked for the pharmaceutical company. She learned to be more assertive, and she learned to persevere through difficult situations. As Sally summarized, “I took a lot of good out of it, but it just wasn’t for me.” When Sally envisioned her future, she could not see herself continuing in the field. As she explained, “I tried to envision what I would be like when I was 50. Did I want to be peddling samples? It just didn’t fit.”

At a holiday party, Sally found herself talking to a faculty member from Prairie University. The faculty member mentioned to Sally that the university was in the process of hiring a faculty member to lead an adult fitness program. Soon after that, to her own surprise, Sally was entering a career in academia:

Originally, I didn’t have any intention of teaching whatsoever. I didn’t even know that it was an option with a master’s degree. I didn’t even think about it. When the faculty member said that the opening was there and that it involved working with adult fitness—a group that I had really enjoyed working with when I was in graduate school—I jumped on it and applied. That was it.

In April 2001, Sally learned that she was expecting her first child. She accepted the faculty position at Prairie University two months later.

**Becoming a terminal degree holder—“I pulled over and just started drinking coffee.”** Prairie University hired Sally with the agreement that she would complete 30 credit hours beyond her master’s degree during her tenure-track years. Sally’s daughter was born in January 2002, during Sally’s first year on the tenure track. In August 2002, Sally enrolled in two graduate classes, for a total of six credit hours, at Prairie University. In Spring 2003, Sally



transferred the six credit hours that she had just earned at Prairie University into a doctoral program at a research university located three hours south of Prairie University.

Though she was not required to earn a terminal degree in order to be granted tenure, Sally committed herself to earning the degree. The same work ethic and level of commitment that drove Sally to become the top pharmaceutical salesperson in her region also pushed her to reach her utmost potential in academia. Sally explained, “Thirty credit hours was almost halfway to a doctorate. I figured that if I was going to invest the time and energy, I wanted it to count towards something. I did not want to just barely make the minimum.” Sally believed that it was important for her to earn the same level of academic credentials as her colleagues:

I want to be at least equal with my peers who are all tenured. The Ph.D. will also give me more credibility with students. I think that students look upon you a little more respectfully if they see that “Dr.” before your name. They know that you have really earned something. Ph.D.s are not just something that are given out. You really have to work for it.

Sally continued taking classes part-time for more than four years, completing preliminary examinations in Fall 2007. Sally continues to work on her dissertation. Although she has already earned tenure, Sally refuses to entertain the thought of not finishing her Ph.D.:

Now I’m ABD, and I’m still feeling that pressure. I’m so close, and I really need to just get over that last hump to get it done. Never really is it in the back of my head that I don’t need to finish the dissertation. I just have that drive. . . . I have never considered the fact that it is not mandatory.

In Fall 2003, Sally took the only on-line course that was offered within her Ph.D. program. Sally’s son was born in November 2003 and the on-line course allowed her to

complete her assignments in advance from home. Without the on-line class, Sally would have had to postpone her studies for that semester. She explained, “I knew that after a certain period of time I wouldn’t be able to travel that far away. I knew that I couldn’t be three hours away from the hospital at which I would deliver.”

Throughout the four years that Sally completed her Ph.D. coursework, she led an adult fitness program which opened at 5:30 a.m. three days a week. Sally described her typical schedule on a day that she led adult fitness in the morning and had class at night:

There were lots of days when I was up at 3:30 a.m. to get ready for work. I would leave home by 4:30 a.m. to be at Prairie University by 5:15 a.m. I would work with adult fitness until 7:00 a.m. and then teach various classes, prep for classes, and conduct office hours. I would leave straight from here for the three hour trip down to class, and then I would sit in class for a couple of hours. A lot of times, I would get home between 10:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m.

Sally’s schedule became even more grueling after her son was born. As a coping mechanism, she began drinking coffee:

I started drinking coffee after I had the baby. He had been up through the night. I was tired, and I was falling asleep driving home. I pulled over and just started drinking coffee. That did not necessarily help tremendously, but it made me think that it was helping and made me stay awake.

As Sally juggled her responsibilities as a professor, student, and mother, her schedule was constantly changing. Sally described the fluctuation in her routine:

There were a lot of days when I didn’t even see the kids. I was gone to work before the kids woke up, and I didn’t get home until after they went to bed. Thank goodness for cell

phones! On other days when I didn't have adult fitness, I would be at home with them in the morning. I would wake them up, have breakfast with them, get them ready, and take them to daycare. A lot of times, on the nights when I didn't have class, I would spend as much time as I could with the kids. Then on the weekends, when my husband was home, I would try to catch up on homework. There were several times when I just had one class per week. I would stay here at the office beyond my work hours to do homework and try to get caught up or work ahead. A couple of different times, the courses required group work. That got a little tricky because it required extra trips or somehow communicating with the other people in my group. That got tricky sometimes, but I just made it work. You do what you have to do.

**Becoming a mom—"We really just took our blessings when we could get them."**

Sally and her husband were married in 1995, the year before Sally finished her undergraduate degree. Because they struggled to conceive their first two children, the timing of the births of their children was not planned:

It took us about three years to conceive our first. It took a while to conceive the second, too—it took a few months. . . . With our third, we finally decided that our family wasn't finished yet. It took us a while to figure that out until things started slowing down with me traveling. We conceived her right away. It was a blessing. We really just took our blessings when we could get them.

Sally would have liked for her children to have been born in the summer so that she could have been at home with them for longer than six weeks, but that never happened. All three of Sally's children were born in the winter.

To get through the hectic years of her Ph.D. coursework, Sally focused on the benefits that the degree would bring to her family. Sally explained that she was willing to make sacrifices while her children were young so that she would be more available to them as they grew older:

I always focused on the free time that the degree would allow me to have when the kids were older. I knew that the degree would allow me to be more available when the kids were more involved in activities and had ballgames at night. My goal was to complete my coursework—the stuff that I had to travel for—by the time my daughter started school. I was pretty close. I think I had one class to finish up, maybe two, when she started kindergarten. I wanted to get it done. When the kids were babies, they didn't really know that Mom was missing, as long as someone was holding them, feeding them, and taking care of them, especially if Dad or Grandma was with them. I knew it, and it was hard for me. Now that they are older, they know if I am gone. They say, "Whoa! Where are you going? You are missing this. You are missing that." I am trying to make a point to be there now.

Now, unlike during the years that she was on the tenure track, Sally enjoys the flexibility offered by her career. If her children have ballgames, she is always home for the games. She never questions whether or not she is going to be home on the weekend. Sally and her husband both appreciate that Sally's career allows her to be at home with the children during the summer. The children can enjoy a slower, more relaxed vacation, rather than attending daycare full-time.

Although Sally did not miss any big "firsts" as her children grew from babies to toddlers, she did miss a lot of her children's simple daily moments. Sally shared that she was particularly disappointed when she was in class or studying during the children's bedtime routine:

I missed out on a lot of the night routines. I love those kinds of routines where you get to feed them, give them a bath, read them a book, and put them to bed. Sometimes you think those things are a little bit mundane, but being away makes you appreciate them. I love to read to my kids at night.

There were several nights when Sally's daughter heard her arrive home from class late at night. Her little girl would start crying and say, "I just miss you so much." Sally said, "It was heartbreaking." During those moments, Sally forced herself to remember why she committed to finishing her degree:

[Listening to your child cry] makes you really evaluate if it is worth it or not. Even in the best of all situations, really what have I gained from all of this? A lot of the classes are similar to what you experienced as a bachelor's and master's student. There were times when I thought, "I probably will never utilize this information. I probably just spent the last four months sitting for hours in a class that won't have any impact on my professional career at all." In those types of classes, you sit back and wonder, "What am I doing? Why am I here?" It just made me focus on the big picture. I focused on the big reason why I was taking the classes—so that I could have time with my family when the children were older. It was hard, but if I stayed focused on the big picture of why I was doing things, it made it more bearable.

### **Emily's Story**

Emily is an associate professor of athletic training at Prairie University. Having earned both her bachelor's degree and master's degree at Prairie University, Emily began teaching at the institution in a part-time interim role in 2001. She was hired in a full-time tenure-track position in 2002 and tenured effective Fall 2008. Like Sally, Emily was hired with a "master's plus 30

agreement” and completed her Ph.D. coursework during her years on the tenure track. Emily’s husband is the production coordinator for a company that makes concrete structures for road construction projects. Because the summer months are his busiest at work, Emily’s husband is able to handle the vast majority of household and childcare responsibilities during the academic year. Emily has three children—an eight-year-old son, a seven-year-old daughter, and a two-year-old son. Emily is White.

For our interview, Emily and I met in an office attached to the athletic training room at Prairie University. The temperature in this office was much more comfortable than the temperature in Emily’s faculty office, and it still offered the privacy that we needed. Nobody else was in the training room until about mid-way through our conversation. At that point, a faculty member with an ankle injury came to the training room seeking some assistance from Emily. Emily took about five minutes to start the professor on some therapeutic exercises, and then she returned to the adjacent office to continue our interview.

**Becoming a professor—“Deciding to leave the hospital was the most heart wrenching decision of my life.”** After earning a bachelor’s degree in physical education with an option in athletic training and a master’s degree in sports administration, Emily was employed as an athletic trainer at a small community hospital. As a hospital employee, Emily especially enjoyed outreach work with the area high schools. Emily described how the parents of local high school athletes assisted with the care of her young son and infant daughter:

My children were taken in as part of the school district. When I went to games, parents would pop their heads in and ask, “Do you need us to watch the kids?” They would take my oldest son home, feed him, give him a bath, put his pajamas on, and bring him back to

me halfway through the varsity game. They would sit and hang out with him until I was done working. They would bring me dinner.

During her fourth year working at the hospital, Emily received a phone call from the department chair responsible for the undergraduate athletic training program at Prairie University. The director of the athletic training program had resigned, and the university was struggling to fill the position. Emily agreed to serve as the interim program director in a part-time capacity for one year. At the conclusion of that year, Emily was offered the position on a full-time permanent status.

Because of Emily's deep appreciation for the working environment and relationships that she enjoyed at the hospital, she struggled with the decision to accept the offer to work full-time at Prairie University. Emily described her doubts about leaving the hospital:

Deciding to leave the hospital was the most heart wrenching decision of my life. I was sick to my stomach the whole entire summer after I accepted this position at the university. The people at the hospital were like family. From doing my undergraduate and graduate studies at Prairie University, I knew what kind of issues I was going to have to tackle. I was really wondering if I had made the right decision.

In the end, Emily's decision to leave her position at the hospital focused on the stability that a career at Prairie University would offer her family. Emily described the persistent insecurity of an athletic training position at a small community hospital:

Hospital systems have their ups and downs and always look to cut positions. The athletic training position is considered an extra bonus kind of position. It's one that is more community outreach focused. The athletic training position helps to make the parents and the coaches in the community happy so that they will come back and use the

hospital's services. If the hospital needed to cut a position, that would always be a position that they could cut.

**Becoming a terminal degree holder—“Okay, I can do this!”** At the time that Emily was hired in a tenure-track position in 2002, she knew that she was required to complete 30 credit hours beyond her master's degree in order to be eligible to receive tenure. In 2003, Emily promptly enrolled in graduate classes in the family and consumer sciences program at Prairie University. For four consecutive semesters, Emily earned six credit hours per semester. After completing 24 credit hours beyond her master's degree at Prairie University, Emily's department chair informed her that she would need to complete her six remaining credit hours at a different institution.

Emily opted to complete her final two classes through a Ph.D. program focusing on curriculum and instruction in higher education at a research university two hours from Prairie University. When Emily enrolled in those two classes, her intention was simply to complete the remaining credits that she needed to be eligible for tenure. One of the classes in which Emily enrolled, a class focused on reading and critiquing dissertations, led to an important epiphany moment for Emily. As she read, Emily realized that she had the ability to complete a dissertation. According to Emily, “I realized that it didn't matter where students were enrolled or which institution was awarding the degree; the important thing was whether students had a good group of people working with them to get their dissertation done.” Emily also realized that she was not unlike many of the other students enrolled in the Ph.D. program. Laughing at the memory, Emily described one such classmate:



There was a student who talked about her husband bringing her a six pack of beer while she was writing her dissertation. After one or two cans, she would get in a groove and type away! I thought, “That’s me! Okay, I can do this!”

After Emily realized that she had the ability to succeed in Ph.D. classes and write a dissertation, she and her husband discovered other motivating factors for completion of a Ph.D.—salary and professional rank. Emily explained, “My husband encouraged me to look at where I was on the pay scale and where I could be on it. He said, ‘We can tackle this.’” Emily knew that earning 30 credit hours beyond her master’s degree made her eligible for promotion to associate professor, but only a Ph.D. would enable her to be eligible to earn the rank of professor.

With those motivating factors in mind and the support of her husband, Emily decided to continue in the Ph.D. program focusing on curriculum and instruction. Emily explained the value of honing her skills as a teacher:

The program was very helpful since I don’t have an education background and am in charge of the curriculum and instruction of all of these students in the athletic training program. It doesn’t matter whether or not someone is a very good professional. If you are not a good educator, you will not be able to get information across to the students.

For another two and a half years, Emily drove four hours round trip three days a week to complete her Ph.D. coursework. Emily has been working on her dissertation for approximately two years. She has reached the point where she is awaiting the return of her data.

**Becoming a mom—“I have always been very active.”** By the time Emily began her post-master’s coursework, she and her husband were the parents of two young children. In addition to working full-time at Prairie University, commuting four hours round-trip to a

different institution for Ph.D. coursework, and raising two children, Emily worked part-time for the sports medicine program of a hospital an hour away and she and her husband were building a new house. The hospital hired Emily to assist as an athletic trainer at high school football games and university hockey matches. Emily shrugged off her hectic schedule as normal:

This is just my typical lifestyle. Since childhood, I have always been very active. I was always involved in sports. I was always on student council and those types of activities. I was just as active when I came here to Prairie University as an undergraduate student. I completed close to 3,000 athletic training hours as an undergraduate; our students are only required to complete about 1,500 hours. That was just normal for me.

When asked to describe a typical day during this period in her life, Emily described a schedule with constant movement:

I started at 8:30 a.m. or 9:00 a.m. with administrative and teaching duties. About 4:30 p.m., I would pack up and go to either class or a game. After class or the game, I would stop at the house that we were building. We did all of the painting and trim work ourselves. We installed all of our cabinets. I would stop back at the house and paint for two or three hours. We would leave the new house about 1:00 a.m. and get back home about 2:00 a.m. I would get some sleep and then come back into the office by about 8:30 a.m.

When Emily and her husband were working on their new house, their children were there with them. When the nights got late, the children would camp out in sleeping bags on the floor in one of the bathrooms, the first room in the house that had flooring installed.

Emily and her husband originally planned to have four or five children, but the timing of their third baby was repeatedly pushed back. Emily explained how her family enjoyed

backpacking in the Smoky Mountains over Spring Break. During one of those Spring Break trips, the family got caught in a blizzard and Emily fell a significant distance down the side of the mountain. The fall resulted in a torn labrum in Emily's hip, necessitating hip surgery. Emily explained how a collective series of events prolonged the growth in the size of their family:

I started my doctorate. We built the house. I had hip surgery. All of those things happened. The year that I found out that I was going to have hip surgery was the year that we were thinking about having a third baby. We would have liked to have had a third baby a year earlier if I hadn't fallen down a mountain!

Emily was pregnant with her third child during the last semester of her Ph.D. coursework. That semester, Emily felt the fatigue of her busy schedule. For the first time since beginning Ph.D. coursework, Emily earned a B in a class. Emily explained her performance in that class:

I told my professor, "I'm sorry. I'm tired. I'm pregnant. I know that this is not the quality of work that I am capable of producing. Don't feel bad for one minute if you give me a B or a C." That was the only class that I felt bad about not giving full effort.

Just one month after the conclusion of her last semester of Ph.D. coursework, Emily traveled with a university hockey team to a match in North Dakota. Recalling the trip, Emily declared, "Sixteen hours on a bus when you are five months pregnant is not pleasant! . . . I was miserable!" The hockey players that Emily assisted had no idea that she was pregnant that season. Laughing, Emily described the players' shock after her son was born:

I always freeze at hockey games because I am working right on the ice. Because I wear a lot of layers, the hockey players don't know what I look like in normal clothes. . . . I delivered our son three days before the team's end-of-the-year party. When I showed up

at the party with a newborn, the players were shocked. They looked at me in disbelief and asked, “You were pregnant?”

Emily’s children are accustomed to the family’s schedule and enjoy attending athletic events with Emily. Emily described the children’s perceptions:

Our kids think that this is the normal way of life. It is what they have grown up with and what they know. They get to go to games with me. I will let them sit on the sidelines with me during the freshmen and junior varsity games. They will be in charge of filling up the water bottles and those kinds of things. Our youngest is too small to do that yet, but I will take him to volleyball games because they are fairly short. I will take the kids to soccer games. . . . They love it. They like being out there, and they like getting to go to events. They have fun.

Largely thanks to the flexibility of her work, Emily does not feel that she has missed many important moments during the early years of her children’s lives. Emily explained, “If there is something big going on, I just call the hospital and say, ‘It’s my child’s birthday.’ If we have a wedding to attend or something like that, they help me find somebody to cover the athletic event.”

### **Greta’s Story**

Greta is an assistant professor of counseling at Prairie University, where she earned both her bachelor’s degree and her master’s degree. Hired in a tenure-track position at Prairie University in 2005, Greta has completed four years on the tenure track. Because Greta teaches graduate classes that meet in the evening, she is typically able to be at home with her young children until 3:00 p.m. When Greta leaves for class, a babysitter takes care of her children until Greta’s husband arrives home from work at approximately 6:00 p.m. To find babysitters,

Greta advertises in Prairie University's student newspaper. Each time she places an ad, Greta receives phone calls from 70 to 80 girls interested in babysitting. During our interview in her office, Greta's cell phone rang a few times. Because her children were at home with a babysitter, Greta always checked to make sure that the call wasn't from the babysitter. Greta has three children—a four-year-old son, a three-year-old son, and a one-year-old daughter. Greta is White.

**Becoming a professor—“They just wanted an adjunct, and I thought I could use a little extra money.”** After earning a master's degree, Greta worked in the community counseling field, assisting children who were abused and women who were victims of domestic violence. At that time, the local community college advertised an opening to teach a psychology course. Greta explained, “They just wanted an adjunct, and I thought I could use a little extra money because I still had my school debt. I started teaching, and I really enjoyed it.”

Shortly after Greta discovered her enjoyment of teaching, a faculty position opened at Prairie University. The department chair and dean decided to fill the position with an annually contracted faculty member for one year, and Greta was hired for the temporary position. As that year neared its close, the department chair told Greta that she might be able to remain on staff as an adjunct who occasionally taught a class, but that she would not be eligible for a more permanent position without earning a Ph.D.

During the year that Greta taught as an adjunct faculty member, she discovered that teaching at Prairie University allowed her to impact lives, just as she had done as a counselor, but to do so in a way that was healthier for herself and her family. Greta explained the physical and emotional toll of the community counseling field:

A lot of the clinical counseling work had pagers and required you to be on call. The weekends and the evenings were trying. There was also an emotional toll. It takes a lot for clinicians in the field to deal with some of the tragedies that are involved. . . . I wanted to make a difference or a change in the world, and I realized that [teaching] was a different way to still make that impact.

**Becoming a terminal degree holder—“I had a very strong mentor.”** In addition to being encouraged by the department chair to consider a Ph.D. program, Greta was also encouraged by a mentor who was a senior faculty member in the department. Greta explained, “I had a very strong mentor who encouraged me to go on for a Ph.D. That is when I was propelled to earn the Ph.D.”

Just married in 2000, Greta began a four year Ph.D. program in counseling psychology at a research university in 2001. After completing three years of coursework, Greta was matched with an internship in Wisconsin for her fourth year as a Ph.D. student. About a week after learning the location of her internship assignment, Greta and her husband learned that they were expecting their first child. A whirlwind of activity ensued that fall. After moving in July and beginning her internship, Greta gave birth to her son in October and defended her dissertation in December.

As an intern, Greta worked 40 hours a week as a psychologist at a university counseling center. Following the birth of her son, Greta took just eight days for maternity leave. Greta recalled that short leave:

There were a specific number of hours that you had to clock in your internship, so I was very intentional about the number of days and hours that I would miss. . . . People said, “Wow! How can you be back already?” I said, “Because I want to graduate!”

During the eight days of her maternity leave, Greta tweaked the final version of her dissertation, created the presentation for her defense, and drove more than 11 hours round trip to meet with her dissertation chair. Greta explained, “It wasn’t a break. It was a break from work, but not from school.”

While Greta slipped a meeting with her dissertation chair in between her week-old son’s breastfeeding times, her husband cared for their newborn in the lobby of the academic building. Greta recalled the reactions of a couple of adult women who were sitting in the lobby area with her husband:

They said to him, “We cannot believe that you brought that baby here!” They were ostracizing us. I felt like saying, “You have no idea! These are the choices that have to be made to get through such a situation.”

In retrospect, Greta acknowledged the challenge of that trip to meet with her dissertation chair during her brief maternity leave. Greta shared:

As I look back, I think, “How the hell did I do that?” I don’t know. Sometimes you just do it because you have to. I was just 30, so I think being a little bit younger helped. I had a very easy childbirth. Not being able to sleep was the worst part for me—being tired. It just seemed to work. Of course, my husband drove, so I didn’t have that responsibility. I had to take care of the baby. We just did it. It had to happen before I returned to work.

Less than two months later, Greta and her family repeated their 11 hour road trip for Greta’s dissertation defense. Like the meeting with her committee chair, Greta’s defense was scheduled around her son’s breastfeeding schedule. Greta recalled, “I was concerned about how long the defense was going to take because I was going to have to go nurse.” Greta and her

family spent the night after her defense at the home of the faculty mentor who encouraged Greta to pursue her Ph.D. Greta's mentor was extremely supportive of Greta's career and family situation, but she did not have children of her own. With gentle laughter, Greta recalled a naïve question posed by her faculty mentor as Greta's family prepared for bed. Greta explained, "She asked, 'How many times are you going to be up tonight?' She was just oblivious to the whole idea of what that was going to entail!"

After defending her dissertation in December 2004, Greta accepted a tenure-track position at Prairie University in March 2005 and officially graduated in May 2005.

**Becoming a mom—"We were both 30."** As Greta completed her Ph.D. coursework and prepared for her internship match, she and her husband decided that they were ready to have a baby. Greta explained how unknowns related to her professional future and uncertainties related to fertility influenced that decision:

I didn't know when there was going to be an ideal time, so we decided to try then. . . . We were both 30, and we thought, "Wow—are we going to let our careers continue to guide us? What if I get a really intensive university position where I have to prep five courses?" I think the other piece was that we didn't know how long it would take for us to have a baby. There is that saying, "You'd better get practicing." Well, our son was conceived the first time! [She laughs.] We have had friends who have taken two years to conceive. Being 30, we knew it wasn't like we were 24. We knew that it could take a little bit longer because of our age. We didn't know if one of us would have a complication that would make it more difficult to conceive. I think all of those things played in. I don't know if it was the best time or the easiest time. We just knew that we were ready to be parents, regardless of our professional lives.



When Greta began teaching in a tenure-track position at Prairie University, her oldest son was 10 months old. While on the tenure track at Prairie University, Greta's family has grown with the addition of two more babies.

### **Sadie's Story**

Sadie is an assistant professor of college student affairs at Rolling Hills University. Like Greta, Sadie was hired in a tenure-track position in 2005. Though she has been on the tenure track for four years, Sadie has earned three years of credit towards tenure because she opted to stop the tenure clock for one year when her daughter was born. Sadie commutes 50 minutes each way to campus. With a J.D. from an Ivy League university, Sadie practiced corporate law for four years before accepting the advice of a long-time mentor to pursue a Ph.D. in higher education and college student affairs. Sadie has a same-sex partner who works in a community cultural arts department. In 2008, Sadie gave birth to the couple's first child—a baby girl. Sadie is White.

At the time of our interview, Sadie was simultaneously trying to write articles to send out for publication, pack the family's belongings to move to a new home, and plan her daughter's first birthday party. A few days earlier, Sadie and her partner had sold their home, as evidenced by the realtor's "Sold!" sign in the front yard. As I parked along the street next to Sadie's house, an appraiser pulled up right behind me. The appraiser and I were both greeted in the yard by Sadie and a gregarious black lab. The appraiser completed his work in about five minutes, snapping photos of the exterior of the house and then taking a quick tour of the inside. When the appraiser's work was done, Sadie and I sat down together at her kitchen table for the interview.

**Becoming a professor—"I was a stubborn 21-year-old, 22-year-old."** Mentors and friends recognized that Sadie was a very engaged undergraduate student and recommended that

she consider a career in college student affairs. Sadie recalled, “I said to them, ‘I don’t know what that is. Why would I do that? I already know how to be a college student.’” Instead, Sadie continued on her academic path to a law degree after the completion of an undergraduate degree in English. Sadie explained her thought process as an undergraduate:

I was a stubborn 21-year-old, 22-year-old. I thought I knew what I wanted to do. I liked to read and write, so I liked the skills that a lawyer would use. I never thought that I would practice law, but I thought that it was a flexible degree. I did it without ever thinking about being interested in the law.

During law school, Sadie realized that she did not like the field she was studying, but she did not know how to stop the strong momentum which she had built. Sadie described her experience:

I was not happy in law school, but there was such inertia that I didn’t know what else I wanted to do. I was at an Ivy League law school. It is not hard to get a job with a degree from that law school. I thought about leaving, but why would a 23-year-old leave that close to having a law degree from that institution?

After graduating with an Ivy League degree, Sadie practiced “big corporate law” for four years. In retrospect, Sadie realizes that she might have been happier in the field if she would have chosen to practice in a different area of law. Sadie explained:

Looking back now, at age 39, I could have used a law degree in much more interesting ways. But, I thought much more conservatively at that point. I thought, “Here is the traditional way to use a law degree. This is the kind of law that you practice.” So that is what I did. It was just all wrong for me.

**Becoming a terminal degree holder—“That same dear mentor . . .”.** During Sadie’s fourth year as a corporate lawyer, the questions of her undergraduate mentor caught her attention. Sadie explained the pivotal moment when her mentor helped lead her into a new career:

That same dear mentor who had talked to me when I was 22 about going into student affairs stopped me and asked, “What are you thinking?” She encouraged me to go back to school and get a Ph.D. I still don’t know that I really knew what I was doing at that point, but I trusted that mentor.

Able to examine her personal experience through the lens of student development theory, Sadie concluded, “Going to law school was really just the wrong decision, but it was the best decision that I could make at that time. In some ways, this is a do-over.”

Sadie does not attempt to connect her law career with her career in student affairs. Sadie explained her thoughts on her career shift:

I just started over. Of course, I started over with very good skills—writing, analyzing, and working efficiently. You learn some amazing things as a lawyer. I use those kinds of skills in my life as a professor. But, content-wise, I don’t really connect my law background with what I do now.

As with Greta’s decision to pursue a Ph.D., Sadie’s decision to pursue a Ph.D. was largely based upon the thoughtful guidance of a faculty mentor. Sadie expressed her appreciation for her relationship with her mentor and her thankfulness for her mentor’s patience:

We’ve been dear friends since I was a sophomore in college. She followed every part of my life. It took a certain amount of time until I was ready to listen and ready to transition from law to higher education.

**Becoming a mom—“I didn’t expect how quickly priorities could shift.”** Unlike the other participants, Sadie’s academic career was well-established before she became a mother. Sadie spent two years teaching at a Southern research university—the first year as a visiting assistant professor and the second year as an assistant professor—before accepting the tenure-track position at Rolling Hills University. Before her daughter was born during her fourth year on the tenure track at Rolling Hills University, Sadie was well-assimilated to the university, and her research agenda was well-recognized.

Sadie and her partner met in 2005. Within a couple of years, they had decided that they were ready to have a baby. Sadie explained, “I was 38 at that time. I was getting older, and we knew that there wasn’t a lot more time to wait to have a baby.” Sadie recognized that she was getting later in the tenure-track process at Rolling Hills University, but she knew that the university offered an option to stop the tenure clock upon the birth of a child.

On an annual basis, the provost’s office at Rolling Hills University arranges meetings between tenure-track faculty and tenured professors. At those meetings, Sadie learned about the university’s support for new parents:

From the get-go, they let us know about [the option to stop the tenure clock]. They made it very clear to us that we would not be held to a higher standard if we chose to stop the clock. We would not be expected to have more written since we were at the university for six years instead of five. They made it very clear that it is as if that year really wasn’t there. It was comforting knowing that was there and that the provost’s office really took it seriously. . . . I knew that there were some very positive things going on at the university. I never felt that I would be punished for having a baby.

When Sadie's daughter was born, she struggled with the decision of whether or not to stop the tenure clock. Sadie recalled her strong desire to keep the clock ticking:

I was considering not stopping the tenure clock because I was so close to achieving it. I knew that I was almost there. I really wrestled with whether I could just plow through and finish the tenure process. It would have been so wonderful to have that pressure off me!

Because Rolling Hills University offered faculty up to a year after a qualifying event to decide whether or not to stop the tenure clock, Sadie had time to see how much writing she was able (or not able) to do during that year. Within a few months, Sadie realized that she was not doing the amount of writing that she had anticipated doing after the birth of her daughter:

During my maternity leave, I never thought about writing. I didn't think about my classes. I thoroughly enjoyed those three months. When I went back to work mid-semester, I wasn't sure whether or not I was going to stop the tenure clock. In the back of my mind, I knew that the option was there, so I didn't feel pressure. I did not do any work over Winter Break. I spent Winter Break with the baby. The spring after my maternity leave, I needed to decide whether or not to stop the tenure clock. The fact that I wasn't writing was a strong clue that I needed to stop the clock!

Sadie's decision to stop the tenure clock was fully supported by her colleagues, department chair, and dean. According to Sadie, "Everyone said, 'Take time. Go enjoy the baby.'" After making her decision to stop the tenure clock, Sadie allowed herself to spend every weekend with her daughter. Sadie explained, "By taking out the need to write, I was still able to enjoy her. . . . The policy allowing the option of stopping the clock was very helpful to me."

Sadie explained how parenthood was life-changing in ways that she never expected:

I didn't know that I would be so distracted from work. I did not know how much the baby would just take over and become all-consuming for me. I didn't know that my head would be so overloaded. I didn't expect how quickly priorities could shift. I didn't expect how quickly my head would think about things like "Cow goes 'moo'" and how much I would enjoy that. I have always been very good at compartmentalizing my work. No matter how many other things were going on, I could sit down at the computer and write. This has changed that. I do okay, but I am much slower. I am just inefficient in my work now. People said that I would be more efficient because I would have a certain amount of time to get things done so that I could go get the baby and bring her home. That has not been the case for me. My head just works slower. It just does. That has probably been the biggest surprise for me—the distraction and the shift of priorities. Sadie's shift in priorities was evident while she and her partner viewed homes on the market. Sadie described how she looked at the homes through new eyes:

Before, with every move, my first priority was always figuring out where my study would be, where I would work. Looking at the new house, I didn't even think about my study. I didn't think about a study until my partner said, "You could put your study in such and such location." It hadn't even occurred to me that I needed a place to work. I was only thinking about what the yard was like for the baby and whether the house was accessible for my mom. I was wondering if there was enough space for the toys. I didn't even think about the fact that I still have a job.

At the time of our interview, Sadie knew that she was about to embark on perhaps the most critical year of her career, her final year of writing before going up for tenure. Her struggle with that reality was palpable throughout our conversation. Early in our discussion Sadie

recognized, “I need to get tenure and this is the year to do that. My mind isn’t there, but I have to force it to be there.” Since becoming a mother, there have been times when Sadie has questioned whether she wants to continue a career in academia:

Now, it’s like, “Oh crap. I’ve gotten myself into this job that requires all of this work and this year I have to get all of this stuff written, but the core of me wants to be hanging out at home.” That is truly a struggle. I am in a position that I would rather not be in. I’m having to fight against what I would truly like to be doing. There’s not really an option to switch it at this point.

### **Sarah’s Story**

Sarah is an associate professor of sociology at City University. Sarah was tenured effective Fall 2007. She is regarded as a prominent researcher in her field on a national level. Sarah’s husband also has a Ph.D. in sociology, but he has since followed a career path in the computer software industry. During the 2007-2008 academic year, Sarah was a fellow at an Ivy League institution. While living near the Ivy League institution, Sarah’s husband was employed by a local software company. When Sarah and her son returned to City University, Sarah’s husband continued living on the East Coast. Though they remain married, Sarah and her husband have defined this past year as a time of separation. Sarah has been raising her 13-year-old son as a single parent while she and her husband decide whether or not to reconcile their marriage. Sarah is White.

Sarah will not be returning to City University for the 2009-2010 academic year. She has accepted a position at the Midwestern research university at which she earned her undergraduate degrees. When Sarah and her son move to their new home, Sarah’s husband will join them.

Though Sarah is not certain whether she and her husband will be able to reconcile their marriage, they have decided to give the marriage another chance:

It is not exactly clear how it will sort out, but the financial implications of maintaining two households definitely became quite clear to us [during our separation]. We also both realized that it is a shitload of work to maintain two households.

At the time of our interview, Sarah's house was on the market. We conducted our interview in the backyard of Sarah's friend's house while a realtor showed Sarah's house to a prospective buyer.

**Becoming a professor—"It was sort of destiny."** As a faculty member, Sarah has followed in the footsteps of her father, a physics professor at a research university. Sarah explained how her career choice felt entirely natural:

It was sort of destiny. It was kind of inevitable. . . . Growing up, I never really had a close friend whose dad was not a professor. It would have been more of a decision *not* to be an academic than to be an academic.

Even as a child, it was evident that Sarah was gifted with academic ability and that she had found a niche in the classroom:

I was always very, very, very academic. I was valedictorian of my high school class. I was a National Merit Scholar. I was totally goody two shoes and involved in absolutely everything. I was a class officer, co-captain of the swim team, and the whole nine yards. I was really, really, really good at school. And then I went to college and I continued to be really, really, really good at school. What do you do if you are really, really, really good at school? You keep going to school! [She laughs.] It's like you have certain forms of capital and you figure out where you can cash in the best on what you are good



at. From the time I was in elementary school, it was pretty clear that school was where I would cash in.

In junior high, Sarah was assigned to write an autobiography. On the last page of the book, students were asked to write about what career they wanted to pursue when they were older. Sarah recalled, “Even then, I wrote about being a professor.”

As a child, Sarah recognized the positive aspects of an academic career. According to Sarah, “[Dad] had a great job. It was pretty clear that he worked *all* the time, but he traveled a lot and his students loved him.” Sarah’s father was the first member of his family to leave the family’s Midwestern farm and pursue a career outside of agriculture. Sarah discussed that life-changing transition for her father:

[Dad’s] brother stayed on the farm and died of emphysema at about age 65 or so. My dad was the whip smart kid who went off to college, escaped the farm, and became a professor. Now my dad is 70 years old. I suspect that there isn’t a day that goes by that he doesn’t say, “Whew! I’m glad that I got out and did not have that life.” He never really stopped being appreciative and grateful for being able to have that life, as opposed to the life that he was probably meant to have.

Though she clearly knew that she wanted to pursue a career in academia, deciding which field to study was more challenging for Sarah. According to Sarah, the most natural route would have been for her to study science:

My father was a scientist, so that was probably what I was supposed to do. I did a computer science major as well as a sociology major. I did the computer science degree to make my parents happy, and I found the sociology major on my own.

Sarah's interest in sociology was fueled by a course titled "Sociology of Sex Roles," a course in which she enrolled right after high school. According to Sarah, "I thought that class was really cool, so I took more sociology classes." By the time Sarah was a senior in college, she was enrolling in graduate level sociology classes. As she entered graduate school, Sarah decided to study the field which she found the most intriguing:

If you are going to do a research degree, it doesn't really matter what field you study. It is all logic. I felt that I might as well go for the degree area in which the logic puzzles were more interesting, so I chose to study sociology.

**Becoming a terminal degree holder—"It had been a decade, so it was time!"** Sarah's graduate education spanned a decade from 1988 to 1998. For the last four years of that decade, Sarah applied for academic positions but did not receive an offer. Sarah poignantly recalled, "It is really, really, really awful to study something for a decade and then not be sure if you are going to be able to get a job doing it." During this period of time, Sarah completed the final edits to her dissertation, worked on turning her dissertation into a book for publication, taught a class, and worked half-time in an academic dean's office at the research university at which she did her graduate studies. Ironically, Sarah's work in the dean's office involved a survey project following the career paths of people who earned their Ph.D.s in the 1980s. Laughing about the irony of the situation, Sarah recalled the purpose of the study:

I was focusing on the English Ph.D.s and looking at where people who had earned their English degrees in 1982 and 1985 were at by about 1998. Had they eventually been hired into a tenure-track position? Were they completely miserable if they were not? What happened with their lives? Were they driving taxis?

During her work with the study, Sarah was thankful to learn that those surveyed were not driving taxis. About half of the graduates surveyed were hired into tenure-track positions. Others who opted to pursue careers in academic administration or other fields such as law were happy as well.

In 1998, Sarah decided to file her dissertation. Although she had been hoping to wait to file until after she was offered a faculty position, Sarah decided that the time had come to move on:

If I would have gotten a job in 1997, I would have figured out how to file the dissertation in 1997. But with no job, there wasn't really a reason to do it. But, then I was finally just done. It had been a decade, so it was time! [She laughs.]

On the same day that Sarah submitted her dissertation to the Graduate Division of her university, she also mailed it to the University of Chicago press. According to Sarah, "That was crucial. It was pretty evident that I wasn't going to get a job until the book was under contract." During the next year, Sarah received a contract for the publication of her book, and she was offered a tenure-track position at City University.

**Becoming a mom—"It was pretty much an accidentally on purpose situation."**

Sarah's son was born while she was working on her dissertation. Sarah described the timing of her son's birth:

It was pretty much an accidentally on purpose situation. I think I wanted a baby more than I was willing to admit, but I don't know that I ever would have had the nerve to have actually had a baby on purpose. It's scary.

Over Christmas, Sarah and her partner visited their respective families and explained that they were pregnant and planned to get married. Three months later, they were married. On her

wedding day, Sarah learned that she had been selected to receive a major dissertation fellowship. Sarah remembered, “That meant that we would have money to live on during the next year. That was pretty cool.” Shortly after returning from their honeymoon, Sarah went into pre-term labor. She was hospitalized for about a month and on bed rest until her son was born.

In retrospect, Sarah recognized the mixed blessing of having a baby while still in graduate school. She explained the trade-offs of having more time but little money:

In some ways, having a baby in graduate school is a lot easier than having a baby as a professor. It’s sort of a trade-off. You have the additional time and people aren’t looking at you all the time. It is not as exposed. You can build in more of a gap, and no one really notices what you are doing. You are not on the clock. Those years sort of vanish once you have a job. But on the other hand, you are broke. So there is that sort of time vs. money calculation.

Though she was still a student, Sarah expressed thankfulness that her academic future was well-grounded before the birth of her son. According to Sarah, “It was good that I didn’t have him any earlier. I had most of the dissertation set. The die was cast in terms of what my research trajectory was going to be and what I was working on.”

### **Ayana’s Story**

Ayana is an assistant professor of history at City University. The single mother of a 16-year-old daughter, Ayana has completed her fourth year on the tenure track. The 2009-2010 academic year will be a year of milestones for Ayana, both professionally and personally. Professionally, Ayana will be completing her second book in preparation for the submission of her tenure materials; personally, she will be enjoying her daughter’s last year at home before college. Ayana is African American.

As Ayana and I sat at the kitchen table for our interview, I sensed the quiet stillness in the house. As had become a tradition, Ayana's daughter was spending the summer months with her grandmother in a major city more than four hours away. This arrangement allowed Ayana to focus on her research obligations. Ayana explained, "In the summer, I can work all day. When I am being really productive, I don't finish working until 9:00 at night. I can work on the weekends. That is how I catch up."

As our conversation neared its close, I asked Ayana what emotions came to mind when she thought about taking her daughter to college the next year. In response, Ayana shared her concern that she might become lonely:

Ugh, it's going to be sad, but I will also be very happy. I remember how exciting it was to go off to school. I think I will be happy but sad at the same time, especially when I have to come home after dropping her off. I guess it's a little easier in the summers. I remember one summer when she left and all my friends were out of town at the same time. I was just super, super, super duper lonely. That was the first time that I ever felt lonely. I have been alone; I like being alone. But lonely? That was the first time that I had ever felt that. I'm getting a bit concerned about whether I will be lonely when she leaves.

**Becoming a mom—"It was no longer about me."** Ayana's journey as a mother began when she became pregnant as a sophomore in high school. After her daughter was born, Ayana took a year off from high school and did temporary work. Ayana explained what she learned about herself during that year:

I had time away from school to think about what I really wanted to do. I knew that I did not want to do that type of work. I was sure of that. That was what really gave me the opportunity to think about my future, especially since it was no longer about me.

**Becoming a terminal degree holder—“I didn’t think that I wanted to work with high school students.”** Although Ayana was not raised by her father, she was inspired by the knowledge that he had earned a terminal degree. Ayana explained, “My father has a Ph.D. Even though I didn’t grow up with him, he sent me a copy of his degree, and I put it on my wall. . . . I figured that if he could do it, I could too.”

As an undergraduate, Ayana originally declared a public relations major. With time, she realized that major wasn’t a good fit. According to Ayana, “I didn’t really know what [public relations] was; I just heard somebody on television talking about it.”

As Ayana thought through her options for other majors, she became interested in teaching. While she was working temporary jobs during her break from high school, Ayana realized that she did not want to spend her career in a field that required traditional 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. hours:

Really, I just couldn’t see myself working a 9 to 5 job and having two weeks of vacation. That just seemed completely insane. I wanted to see what other types of work existed that would allow me to do what I wanted to do.

Ayana thought that becoming a teacher would allow her the opportunity “to have more time to do the things that I wanted to do.” Ayana changed her major to history with the intention of becoming a high school history teacher.

Shortly before the start of her student teaching assignment, Ayana went to observe in the high school where she would be teaching. Ayana quickly realized that her student teaching

experience would not prepare her to work with the students whom she wanted to teach, and she began to doubt whether she wanted to teach high school students at all:

It was going to be an all White school. My high school was a predominately Black high school. It was two different worlds. I knew that doing student teaching was not going to help me. I knew it would be a waste of time. I also realized that I didn't think that I wanted to work with high school students.

After reflecting on her observations, Ayana decided that she would prefer to teach college-aged students and committed herself to earning a master's degree and Ph.D.

Completing three degrees while raising her daughter, Ayana learned to organize her study schedule. Ayana explained how her academic performance improved when she became a mother:

I learned how to manage my life. I knew that I only had a certain number of hours to get my work done while she was in daycare. After she went to bed, I could get more work done. After I was pregnant, my grades turned around and I never earned less than a 3.5 grade point average.

To Ayana, being a single parent was not viewed as a hurdle to academic success:

I never looked at myself as a single parent. I just thought that I was a mother. I was going to do what I needed to do. I was a pretty determined person. I can accomplish whatever I put my mind to. I never looked at [motherhood] as a big problem.

**Becoming a professor—"I think it was a race issue."** As Ayana reflected on the first four years of her experience on the tenure track, race was clearly a salient part of her experience. Ayana experienced racism amongst both her students and her colleagues. With students, racism was evident in Ayana's course evaluations:

Students would complain about the way that I teach, but then I would go visit colleagues and see that they taught the same things. There is another person who teaches the same course that I teach. I sat in on a couple of his classes. He was teaching the exact same things that I teach. But, when I taught—because it is me—it was a problem.

Ayana recalled a conversation which left her feeling as if a colleague did not think of her as a parent:

It was an issue over summer school. Usually, untenured faculty are given first choice to teach summer school. But, there was somebody who was tenured who always taught that class. My colleague made the comment, “Well, she teaches it all the time.” I pointed out that the colleague was tenured. She basically told me that I needed to save my money. She was being insensitive. She could think of this other woman as a mother, but I was not a mother [in her eyes]. I let her know that I *am* saving my money. I am saving my money so that my child can go to college. That is why I don’t have any money in the summer time. That person was being very insensitive.

When asked why Ayana thought that her colleague made such a comment, Ayana answered, “I think it was a race issue. That is what I immediately thought of. It could have been that she thought my daughter was older. I don’t know what she was thinking, but I was highly offended by it.”

### **Summary of Participant Stories**

The eight academic mothers who shared their stories in this study each experienced a unique journey through academia. Some, like Kay and Greta, became mothers near the very beginning of their faculty careers; others, like Allie and Sadie, developed curriculum vitas that were nearly tenurable before having a child. While most participants earned a Ph.D. before



landing a tenure-track position, Sally and Emily were hired with their master's degrees and simultaneously balanced tenure-track faculty positions, Ph.D. programs, and motherhood. Allie, Sadie, Sarah, and Ayana were each the mothers of one child, while Kay was the mother of two children and Sally, Emily, and Greta each had three children. Although six of the participants enjoyed stable, healthy partnerships, Ayana was single, and Sarah and her husband were separated.

Allie's journey to a faculty career "just sort of happened" after she completed a Ph.D. in biological sciences while working at a federal river ecology laboratory. Within days of accepting a tenure-track faculty position, Allie learned that she and her husband were expecting their first child. Allie, now tenured, opted to teach at Prairie University rather than a research university because of the quality of life that Prairie University offered to her family. Allie and her husband share adjoining faculty offices and can drive the loop from their office, to their home, to their 5-year-old son's daycare, and back to their office in less than 20 minutes.

Since childhood, Kay has wanted to teach mathematics. After earning a Ph.D. in mathematics at a research university in the United States, Kay returned home to South Korea to be married. Shortly thereafter, Kay and her husband returned to the United States so that her husband could further his medical career. Kay and her husband welcomed two baby girls into their family before Kay began commuting two hours each way to teach at Prairie University. When Kay's husband accepted a position on the East Coast, Kay and her daughters moved to the town in which Prairie University is located, and Kay raised her daughters without assistance from family. Though she had just completed her fifth year on the tenure track, Kay decided to take a one year unpaid leave of absence from Prairie University so that she and her daughters, ages seven and five, could be reunited with her husband. At the time of our interview, Kay was

uncertain about her professional future but hopeful that she would be able to continue teaching at Prairie University or a similar institution.

Married the year before she completed her undergraduate degree, Sally and her husband struggled to conceive their first two children and “took [their] blessings when [they] could get them.” Though she had never previously considered the possibility of a career in academia, Sally learned about a tenure-track faculty opening at Prairie University while at a holiday party. Sally was hired for the position with the agreement that she would complete 30 credit hours beyond her master’s degree while on the tenure track. During her first year on the tenure track, Sally gave birth to her first child, a daughter. When her daughter was seven months old, Sally began taking classes for a Ph.D. program in health education at a university three hours away. Sally’s second child, a son, was born in the midst of her Ph.D. studies. Shortly after earning tenure, Sally gave birth to her third child, a second daughter. Having completed her Ph.D. coursework, Sally continues to write her dissertation.

Emily left a career as an athletic trainer at a small community hospital for the stability offered by a career at Prairie University, a decision referred to by Emily as “the most heart wrenching decision of my life.” Hired with the agreement that she would complete 30 credit hours beyond her master’s degree while on the tenure track, Emily promptly enrolled in graduate classes at Prairie University. Emily completed her last six required credit hours through a Ph.D. program focusing on curriculum and instruction in higher education at a university two hours away. While taking what she thought would be her last two graduate classes, Emily realized that she had the academic ability to complete a Ph.D. program. Emily made the commitment to pursue a Ph.D. and then did so while continuing to teach full-time at Prairie University, work part-time for a hospital’s sports medicine program, raise two young children, and build a new

house. Emily was pregnant with her third child during her final semester of Ph.D. coursework. Now tenured, Emily is waiting to receive data back so that she can write the final two chapters of her dissertation.

Greta's road to an academic career began by teaching a community college psychology course as an extra source of income to help reduce her college loan debt. While teaching that course, Greta discovered an enthusiasm for teaching. She eagerly accepted an opportunity to fill a temporary faculty vacancy at Prairie University for one year. When that year came to a close, Greta followed the advice of a senior faculty mentor and enrolled in a Ph.D. program in counseling psychology. Greta's first child, a son, was born while she completed the year-long internship requirement for her Ph.D. program. During Greta's eight day maternity leave from her internship, she and her family drove more than 11 hours round trip so that Greta could meet with her dissertation chair to prepare for her defense. Greta began teaching in a tenure-track position at Prairie University three months after graduating with her Ph.D. During her four years on the tenure track, Greta has given birth to two more children.

After earning a J.D. from an Ivy League university and unhappily pursuing a career in corporate law for four years, Sadie followed advice given to her by a faculty mentor years earlier and earned a Ph.D. in higher education and college student affairs. Sadie taught for two years at a Southern research university before accepting a tenure-track position at Rolling Hills University. Just before moving to Rolling Hills University, Sadie met her partner. At the start of Sadie's fourth year on the tenure track at Rolling Hills University, she and her partner welcomed the birth of their daughter. Sadie utilized Rolling Hills University's option to stop the tenure clock during the year that she gave birth to her daughter, a decision which she said allowed her to enjoy her baby. As a new mother, Sadie is struggling to balance the demands of the tenure

track with her heart's desire to be with her baby. Though she recognizes that it is not a realistic consideration financially, Sadie has contemplated being a stay-at-home mom.

Sarah described her academic career as "destiny." The daughter of a physics professor at a research university, Sarah found her niche in the classroom as an elementary school student. In an autobiography written in junior high, Sarah wrote about her desire to be a university professor. Sarah learned that she was pregnant with her son while she was writing her dissertation. That Christmas, she and her partner visited their families and explained that they were pregnant and planned to get married. On their wedding day three months later, Sarah was notified that she had been selected to receive a dissertation fellowship. Sarah's son was in preschool when she accepted a tenure-track position in sociology at City University. Sarah's son is now 13 years old, and she has earned tenure. Having been separated for the past year, Sarah and her husband are working on reconciling their marriage.

Ayana and her daughter have been a team since Ayana became pregnant at the age of 16. While doing temporary work after the birth of her daughter, Ayana realized that she did not want a career with traditional working hours. Ayana saw a career in education as an opportunity to "have more time to do the things that I wanted to do." Ayana maintained a minimum of a 3.5 grade point average while earning three academic degrees and raising her daughter. Ayana has completed her fourth year as an assistant professor of history at City University. During the coming year, Ayana will be completing a second book in preparation for the submission of her tenure materials, and her daughter will be entering her senior year of high school. Ayana recognized the significance of this time of transition in her life and shared, "I'm getting a bit concerned about whether I will be lonely when she leaves."

Despite their unique stories, the participants in this study shared much in common as mothers on the tenure track. The following chapter analyzes five themes found in the data: enjoying it all...with some compromises, departmental support, sharing 50/50 at home, outside support systems, and challenges.

## CHAPTER 5

### **Themes**

This chapter examines the five themes that emerged during an analysis of the interview transcripts from this study: enjoying it all...with some compromises, departmental support, sharing 50/50 at home, outside support systems, and challenges. The first theme, enjoying it all...with some compromises, examines subthemes of faculty role, family role, and compromises. Recognizing Sadie's desire to be a stay-at-home mother, this theme also includes a subtheme which describes Sadie's struggle. The second theme, departmental support, addresses subthemes of department chair, departmental colleagues, departmental support of flexibility, and departmental support of autonomy. The third theme, sharing 50/50 at home, describes how all five participants who were living with a partner enjoyed an equitable distribution of household and childcare responsibilities at home. The fourth theme, outside support systems, includes subthemes recognizing the essential assistance of grandparents, babysitters and daycare providers, parents of other children, and cleaning services. The final theme, challenges, addresses barriers faced by the participants along their journey to tenure. The subthemes for the final theme are hidden pregnancies and pregnancy discrimination, lack of information regarding maternity benefits, inadequate institutional commitment to partner hires, scarce availability of childcare, insufficient opportunities for mentoring, and requirements to teach evening classes.

### **Enjoying It All... With Some Compromises**

With the exception of Sadie, participants in this study eagerly embraced their dual roles as academic professionals and as mothers and struggled to envision their life any other way. In one of the classes taught by Greta, students are assigned to write a self-portrait paper to examine their personal identity and their leadership style. When Greta models a presentation of the paper to students, she conveys her appreciation of the dual roles in which she serves:

I openly say that I live the American Dream every single day. I have a family. I have the best job there is. I tell my husband that he will always make more money than me, but I will always have more time off. It is a lot of hard work, and it sucks to write the dissertation. (She laughs.) There are challenges, and there are trying moments. Those challenges exist whether you are faculty or an administrator. But it is, by far, the best career I can see out there.

**Faculty role.** Participants repeatedly mentioned their desire for a professional outlet. Sally shared, “I love my kids more than anything in the world, but I could not be a full-time stay-at-home mom.” Similarly, Greta said, “I am not a stay-at-home mom. I need to be by myself. I need to be with other adult women.” Sarah emphasized that motherhood is only part of her identity, a part on which she had never considered solely focusing her adult years. She said, “[Motherhood] is only part of who I am and only part of what I do. Even when I was really little, it never crossed my mind to be a stay-at-home mom. Never.” After describing her career as “something that defines me,” Kay explained that her “traditional” husband also recognized Kay’s need for her career. Kay struggled to find the words to describe the depth of the message that she wanted to convey, but was able to share:

I don't even know how to say this. My job is something that is unique. This is something that only I can do. I know that my husband also wants me to continue teaching. He doesn't want me to be a stay-at-home mom. He knows that I really like [teaching].

Sally teaches a sequential set of classes designed to teach students to understand concepts and then apply them. She described the joy of guiding students through “this path of understanding” that prepares them for their careers:

I teach a series class where students take one class one semester and take another class the very next semester. I basically get to teach them for a full year. I really get to see them grow. The one class is learning the basic concepts; the second class is applying the concepts. I get to transition them through that process. It is really exciting to see that moment when they think, “Oh, yes! I get it!” I love that moment when things suddenly make sense and start clicking.

Like Sally, Greta expressed her enthusiasm for engaging with students in the classroom. Greta described her eagerness to return to teaching after academic breaks and her certainty that she has found her professional niche:

I love [teaching]. I don't feel like this is work. I am excited to teach. . . . At the end of four weeks of Christmas break, I am ready to be back here. My husband asks, “You want to go to work tomorrow?” I say, “Yep! I want to be back!” . . . Career counseling is part of our identity as psychologists and as counselors. I have been blessed to find my match in life.

Emily works part-time as an athletic trainer for junior high school, high school, and college sporting events so that she can stay current in the field as a faculty member. She



explained, “I don’t think I could be a good educator if I were not out there still practicing.”

Emily described her enjoyment of working with students of all ages and being the critical point person when athletes need medical attention:

I enjoy working with people. I enjoy the medical side of the career. I enjoy helping people. I enjoy being in intense situations. I enjoy working with collegiate sports—hockey, football, wrestling. I like being focused; I like being the first line of defense and the person who makes the calls. I enjoy working with kids. . . . I work with junior high kids, high school kids, and college kids, so I work with the full range of age groups. That is nice because it keeps everything in perspective. It keeps you grounded.

Ayana and Sarah chose to pursue their careers at City University because of the institution’s focus on research. According to Ayana, conducting historical research is like solving puzzles. She explained, “For an historian, [research] is about putting pieces together. It’s about going around and collecting all of the information and being able to put the puzzle together. It’s like being a detective.” A few years further along in her career than Ayana, Sarah’s research has earned her recognition and respect in the field of sociology on a national level. Sarah described what she enjoys about the rewards associated with being a top scholar:

I like the intellectual content [of my faculty position]. Doing the work is very aesthetically and intellectually gratifying. I like getting raises. I like winning prizes. I like the deference. I like going to conferences and having people say, “Oh, I read your paper! I really liked it! I have been teaching it in my class!” That is really fun.

**Family role.** When Ayana was hired by City University, she was given a pass for a pair of free tickets to a theater production of her choice at the university. Ayana chose to take her daughter to see *Wit*, a production about Vivian Bearing, a renowned English professor diagnosed

with terminal ovarian cancer. In Bearing's final moments, she was accompanied only by a former professor. As Ayana began her academic career at City University, this production served as a powerful reminder of the importance of family:

The message was that you can't sit here and think that [your career] is all that there is in life. If you think that this is all that there is, that is all that will be there for you. You need to think about the people that are most important to you. [Your job] is just a job. You are doing it because you love it, but you are also doing it because it pays the bills. You can't get so caught up in it that you disregard everybody in your life for it. At the end of the day, it won't be here for you.

As participants described what it meant to them to have children, the word "everything" was used repeatedly. Ayana shared, "[Motherhood] means pretty much everything. It brings me joy." As described by Allie, "[Motherhood] is everything. It has defined me. You think you know who you are until you are a mother. It is your greatest accomplishment. You are a mother forever." Sally echoed the sentiments of Ayana and Allie when she said, "[Having children] means everything! . . . There are lots of people who go through life without kids, maybe they can't have kids or they choose not to. But I can't imagine it." Greta explained how she looked forward to motherhood as a little girl:

I have always wanted to be a mom. I played dolls. Some girls never played house. That was the backbone of my childhood. I was always playing house. I still have my dolls. My mom would take us to garage sales, and we would buy real baby clothes for our dolls. That was *the* highlight!

Now that she is the mother of three children, Greta values her family role more than any other. Like Ayana, Allie, and Sally, Greta shared, “[Motherhood] is everything. It means a lot more than my career.”

Though they enjoy the intellectual fulfillment associated with their careers, Allie and Sally both expressed their willingness to leave their careers if necessitated by the needs of their family. Allie shared, “I’d give up everything in my career for this experience as a mother for my son. Before you had that child, you never thought in a million years that you would do that.” Sally expressed similar sentiments:

My career is very important to me. I really enjoy it. I have a hard time picturing myself doing anything else at this point in my life. But, if I had to make a choice—if my family was being sacrificed beyond normal sacrifice—it wouldn’t break my heart to leave my career.

As a single mother, Ayana could not consider giving up her family’s sole source of income, but she very clearly articulated the order of her priorities. Ayana described how her job was secondary in importance to her daughter:

My job is just a job. [My daughter] is more important than all of that. Whatever she needs gets taken care of first. The other stuff is secondary. That is just the way that I do it. Some people act like their career is their life. [My career] is not my life. It is a way for me to earn money and make a living. That is the way that I look at it. [My daughter’s] needs will always come first.

Motherhood brought a new depth of meaning to Sally’s career. Referring to her career as “meaningless” without children, Sally explained:

I do a lot of my job for self-fulfilling reasons, but I also do it for my family. I do it so that I can provide a better home for them, so that I can have the flexibility to be with them, so that I can show them the value of education, so that I can retire at a decent age and still have the money and the ability to enjoy life with them as they are starting their families. Those are all things that are really valuable to me. I can't imagine not having that purpose. Just doing this job is great, but I need a bigger purpose than just self-fulfillment.

The week before our interview, Greta's family experienced a sudden loss. Observing the support and love that her four-year-old son extended to her family, Greta felt an overwhelming appreciation of motherhood. Greta shared her reaction:

I thought, "Wow, this is what it is all about. This is it, right here." I told my husband that weekend that I did not know what I would do with my time if we did not have children. It would feel so empty or shallow without giving it to children. To me, that is the way that God perceived the world. You have kids, and you give. It is just everything. It is everything to me.

Similarly, becoming a mother enabled Kay to understand the Korean belief that the dead live on through their descendants. Kay described her understanding:

Because I am a mother and I have been raising my children now for seven years, I understand why people say that you aren't really dead when you die. When I look at my children, I see part of myself there. This idea is talked about quite openly in my culture. You are not really dead. Your life still goes on through your children. I really understand that now.

As an educator, Kay viewed motherhood as one of her own teachers. She concluded, “Motherhood is a really good teacher. [As a mother,] I have learned what it is like to love other people more than myself.”

In addition to teaching profound life lessons about the importance of sacrifice and love, motherhood also reminds adults about pure, simple fun. Emily explained the pleasure of watching her youngest son’s facial expressions as he tried out a new toy:

Yesterday, [my son] had the biggest grin on his face because he was out mowing with my husband. My son was using the toy John Deere Power Wheels mower that he got for Christmas. He had an enormous grin on his face for an hour while he mowed nonstop.

**Compromises.** Though the participants in this study were generally content with their dual faculty and family roles, their accomplishment of both roles was rarely achieved without professional and personal compromises. For Allie, Kay, and Greta, balancing faculty and family roles meant accepting faculty positions at less prestigious institutions and modifying the research in which they engage. Sadie is considering the possibility of not pursuing opportunities for promotion in order to spend more time with her daughter. Both Kay and Sadie are considering the possibility of having smaller families than they would ideally like.

The compromises that must be considered by academic mothers were well articulated by Allie. As the chair of a university program designed to mentor women for success in science and engineering, Allie is often asked how she is able to manage a scientific career and family. Allie explained her response to promising young women in the field:

What I always say to these women is, “You can have it all. You just can’t have it all at once.” You have to have balance. . . . You have to be careful of some choices, but you don’t have to compromise your science or whatever it is that you are pursuing. You

might have to compromise the road that you take. You can do really good science. You can be excellent at what you pursue. You just have to get over your status. You have to get over yourself. If you can get over yourself, then you can find a way to do it. I'm not completely over myself, but I am enough to strike balance. (She laughs.) If you keep pushing to be at the very top, unless you have a husband who is willing to be at home, then you are both going to have to compromise. My husband and I have both compromised, and it's okay.

When she became a mother, Allie compromised her potential for a career at a prestigious research university for the opportunity to teach in an environment that allowed her to spend more time with her son. Allie explained, "Why I am here [at Prairie University], instead of trying to get back into a research intensive situation, is all about my son. How I am going about my career is totally based on my son." Allie admitted that making such compromises is sometimes difficult, particularly to one's sense of self-worth:

My colleagues are at Dartmouth doing their thing. It hurts your ego, but you just have to swallow it. I can tell myself, "Hey, my kid is in daycare for six hours a day, and their kid is in daycare for nine hours a day." (She laughs.) That is the trade-off that you get.

In addition to compromising the prestige level of the university at which she chose to pursue her career, Allie has also compromised the type of research in which she participates. Earlier in her career, Allie participated in sampling which was potentially very dangerous. Allie recalled a near-accident which served as a wake-up call to her as a mother:

In collaboration with the Fish and Wildlife Service, we were collecting birds from a superfund site to show damage to the ecosystem caused by a chemical company. The only way to collect birds is to go into an estuary that is almost in the open ocean. You

wait for low tide, and then you take an airboat out and shoot the birds. After you shoot the birds, you have to jump off the airboat and capture the birds. If they have been wounded, they will try to get away. They will get away very quickly. Back in the day, I joke around with my friends that I would jump off the airboat with a gun in my hand, waist deep in water. There are no breaks on an airboat. You have earmuffs on. I turned around and I could sort of faintly hear, “Watch out!” There was my friend about to run me over with the airboat. I ducked under the water, and the boat went over my head. It was dangerous.

After that experience, Allie decided that she was no longer willing to risk her personal safety for her research. Allie shared, “I said to myself, ‘I can’t do this anymore. At the end of the day, these samples are not worth my son not having a mother.’”

As it is for Allie, working at Prairie University rather than a research university is a compromise for Kay. As a graduate student, a post-doctoral student, and a faculty member in South Korea, Kay was enveloped in the environment of research universities. Though she was interviewed for positions at research universities, Kay chose to teach at [Prairie University] because it offered an environment which better allowed her to manage career and family. Kay shared, “As a mom, there was just no way that there was enough time for me to work at a different type of institution.” Kay expressed contentment with her compromise:

Being in a place where the teaching is more primary than research is good for me. If you are at a research institution, sometimes you don’t get to teach your own students. I don’t think that I would like that at all. I would rather teach my own classroom and my own students. That is a very rewarding experience for me.

Greta's decision to teach at Prairie University was influenced by observations that she made while doing her doctoral internship in the counseling center at a research university. According to Greta, "There were always openings at [the research university]. I noticed that the people who were leaving were women. That's didn't mean that they left because of load, but it certainly created wonderment for me." Greta concluded, "That had a lot to do with where I applied."

Unlike Allie, Kay, and Greta, Sadie chose to pursue her career at a research university. As a new mother, Sadie is now considering compromising opportunities for promotion. According to Sadie, "It will be my decision to decide whether I want to become a full professor. Right now, do I have that aspiration? No." Though she recognized that her feelings regarding promotion might change with time, Sadie is eager to experience some relief and be able to enjoy more time with her daughter after she earns tenure.

Both Kay and Sadie may compromise the number of children that they have. As the mother of two daughters, Kay knows that her husband would like to have a son. Kay shared, "In our culture, you need a boy in your family. You need a boy to carry on the family line. . . . Since he is a very traditional Korean man, I think he wants to have a boy." Noting that in Old Korea she could have been forced to divorce her husband for not bearing a son, Kay has told her husband that she does not want to have another child. Kay explained, "If I have another child, I don't think I can do this as my career." Though Sadie would like to have a second child, she is struggling to reconcile her biological clock and her tenure clock:

At some point, I would like for there to be a Baby #2. When does that happen? I don't know. That is something else to think about. Next year is going to be a tough year [on the tenure track], and I'm 39. I'll be 40 this fall. I don't know what all of that means yet.



Sarah and her husband did not want to have a second child, but Sarah also recognized the challenge of earning tenure at City University while raising multiple children. According to Sarah, “For me, given the tenure standards at this university and how my work meshed with the tenure standards at this institution, it was clear to me that I could not earn tenure and have a second child.”

**Sadie’s struggle.** Of the eight participants, Sadie was the only one who had contemplated giving up her worker role, though she knew that doing so was not a realistic possibility. When asked about the effect of motherhood on her career aspirations, Sadie described her shifting priorities and her desire to spend more time with her baby as a stay-at-home mom:

I would be happy being a stay-at-home mom for a while! That’s not going to happen. It’s just not a reality in my life. But if I weren’t dependent on the paycheck, I could very happily see myself staying at home. At one point earlier in my career, I had this vision of being a researcher and scholar making a very big impact on the field. That started to go away some the older I got. I still always wanted to make important contributions, but I didn’t need awards for it. That gradually became less important to me. Since the baby was born, it has become so much less important to me. I still want to do good work, but at this point my family life is so much more important. I am fine with doing a good job at my job. I won’t shirk responsibilities, but I don’t want to take on responsibilities that are going to be more time-consuming or more stressful. I don’t have a lot of high aspirations right now. I still care about what I am doing, but I really would just love to be able to spend more time at home.

Sadie's internal struggle as a new mom was evident in her physical reaction to questions regarding the meaning of her career and the meaning of motherhood. When asked about the meaning of her academic career, Sadie grimaced. After a long pause, Sadie explained her feelings regarding the value of the hours that she spends on research:

When I am home sitting at a computer, [my job] doesn't always feel as meaningful to me, even though I know ultimately I am helping to create a nice body of work that is having some influence. Honestly, I think that having a baby has made that indirect contribution seem even more indirect. When I am writing, no one is leaving that day with a problem solved, a new thought in their head, or something that they are intellectually curious about. Sometimes it causes me to question my day. Is that worth being away from my daughter? With writing, you can spend hours working and sometimes only write three paragraphs. You think to yourself, "What did I just do with my day? Is this really a productive life that I am leading?"

In contrast, Sadie's face lit up with a smile when asked about the meaning of motherhood.

Sadie's description of motherhood radiated warmth and happiness:

Motherhood is just the most unbelievable form of love that I have ever felt. I have led a good happy life surrounded by good people. This is just a whole new level. It means giving all of myself that I am able to give to this little being. It's incredible! The responsibility—in a good way—the opportunity to help shape this little person and give her a happy life is just incredible.

Sadie recognized the difference in her own responses. She said, "See, I smiled about this [question about motherhood]; I grimaced about the question on what my career means."

## Departmental Support

Participants in this study benefitted from department chairs who laid the foundation for workplace environments that were respectful of families, colleagues committed to supporting one another, and workplace cultures that allowed for flexibility and autonomy.

**Department chair.** Greta bluntly described the importance of administrative support when she said, “Shit runs downhill. As faculty, your life can be hell or it can be blissful, depending on your dean and department chair.” Repeatedly, participants in this study described ways that their department chairs went above and beyond the norm to facilitate their family needs. Greta, Kay, and Sarah discussed how their department chairs allowed flexibility in course scheduling. Sarah’s department chair also ensured that all faculty meetings were concluded by 5:30 p.m. Sadie’s department chair supported her in piecing together a creative maternity leave to extend the number of months that Sadie could spend at home with her newborn daughter. Finally, Emily shared how her experience working for two different department chairs demonstrated the value of department chair support. While working under her first department chair, Emily suffered daily migraine headaches and wished every day that she had not accepted a faculty position at Prairie University. When a new chair was hired for her department, Emily’s headaches disappeared and she experienced the benefits of working in a collaborative environment.

Greta described her department chair as “by far, the best department chair ever.” Although all of the classes in the academic program in which Greta teaches are night classes, the department chair allows Greta and her colleagues to choose which nights they teach, within reason. Greta explained, “I can’t offer a course at the same time that someone else is offering a required course, but we all have a very loud voice.” During the summer, Greta’s department

chair allows faculty to choose whether or not they want to teach. Faculty who opt to teach are able to decide in what format and on what dates they wish to teach. Greta opts to teach two summer classes that meet in a weekend format during the week. For each three credit hour class, Greta teaches on Wednesday evenings and all day on Fridays for three weeks. Greta explained, “I choose [the weekend] format. I am supported by the chair, and the students embrace the format. The students work their tails off, but their summer isn’t wrapped in coming to campus from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. every day.” Greta expressed her appreciation for the support of her department chair:

Our chair is great. This is very abnormal. This is not how it usually works. All of those things make my life possible. Our chair has young children. He has a stay-at-home wife, but he understands what it is like to have young children. That absolutely makes a difference.

Kay recognized the critical importance of the support that she received from her department chair during her first five years at Prairie University. When Kay’s husband first moved to the East Coast, Kay’s department chair wrote a letter of recommendation for her to teach part-time at an institution in the East. After an immigration issue prevented Kay from moving, her department chair made certain that Kay’s teaching schedule fit her family obligations. When Kay decided to join her husband on the East Coast at the end of her fifth year on the tenure track, the department chair presented Kay with the option of taking a personal leave from the University:

I turned in my resignation early so that they would be able to replace my position. I didn’t even ask about changing my employment status. My department chair knew that I did not have another job for next year so he came to me and suggested that it would be

better for me to keep this position. I will have the option of returning, which is good. Or, if I apply for new positions, it will be better for me to have a current position on my resume.

Kay concluded, “The chair here is an extremely nice person. I get along with him very well. He has done everything that he could for me. My husband has told me that no other chair will do that much for me.”

Like Greta and Kay, Sarah benefits from a department chair who offers faculty tremendous input into the development of their teaching schedule. According to Sarah, “You get to pick your own teaching schedule, so no one will ever teach more than two days a week.” Faculty are only assigned to teach a night class if they specifically request to teach at night. Because several of the faculty members in Sarah’s department have children, all departmental meetings are held during the day. Sarah described this policy as a given:

Pretty much everyone in sociology has kids. It absolutely goes without saying that there is no such thing as an evening meeting. It is not even discussed. It is completely off the table. It is understood that all meetings will be concluded by 5:30 p.m., period. During a faculty meeting, everybody will get up and leave at 5:30 p.m.

Sadie’s department chair supported her in creatively planning a longer, more flexible maternity leave. Because her daughter was born during the summer, a traditional maternity leave schedule would have required Sadie to return to teaching during the fall semester. With some creativity, Sadie and her department chair developed a plan so that Sadie would not have to return to teaching until January. By happenstance, a visiting professor fell ill while Sadie was pregnant. Sadie agreed to teach that class, with the agreement that she could bank it for use during her maternity leave. Sadie explained:

I taught an overload of courses during the spring that I was pregnant. I was supposed to be teaching two courses that spring, but I taught three instead. I banked one of the courses, and they allowed me to count it towards the fall.

With one class banked, Sadie was still obligated to teach one fall class. So that she could work from home, Sadie's chair allowed her to take on some curricular responsibilities for the department, rather than teach that class. According to Sadie, "[The department] has been looking at how to teach diversity more effectively in the department. I was assigned the task of spending a comparable amount of time doing curricular revision, creating new courses, and piloting some new things." Pleased with her extended time at home, Sadie concluded, "The department worked very well with me to try to help me figure out a way to come back to work."

During Emily's first five years as a faculty member at Prairie University, a negative isolated environment created by the department chair caused her to regret leaving her previous hospital position. When asked whether she was happy with her decision to leave the hospital, Emily said:

During my first five years at the university, I would have said "no" every single day.

During those first five years, I had a migraine every single day. If I was off for Christmas break or summer break, I never had a headache. As soon as school started again, I would have headaches again within three or four days. The headaches were not from the students; they were not from the faculty. They were caused by the environment that was created by the department chair.

When a new department chair was hired, the departmental environment changed, and Emily's migraines disappeared. In response to the same question about her decision to leave the hospital,

Emily shared, “Now I would say ‘yes’ because our department chair situation has changed.”

Emily described the environment created by the new department chair:

Because of our new chair, there is a lot of collegiality within our department now. It is a warm environment. It is an environment that is conducive to relationships within the department. You can stop and talk to your co-workers. You can sit in the main office and have a conversation with a co-worker without getting in trouble.

After experiencing two very different department chairs, Emily concluded, “Having a very open relationship with the department chair is important.”

**Departmental colleagues.** Though every participant but Sarah talked about being either the only woman on the tenure track with young children in her department or one of very few such women in her department, participants repeatedly discussed their thankfulness for support received from colleagues. When challenges arose, participants learned that the support which they had been promised during interviews and as new faculty members was indeed real. Sadie realized this when her pregnancy was warmly embraced by her colleagues; Allie and Sally felt support when their children were sick. Recalling her colleagues’ concern when a virus affected her son’s kidneys, Allie said, “You could tell me about support until the cows came home, but when our son was sick we knew the promise of support was real.”

Sadie’s colleagues “absolutely supported” Rolling Hills University’s policy allowing women to stop the tenure clock following the birth of a child and encouraged Sadie as an academic mother. According to Sadie, “People have done nothing but celebrate the baby. No one has ever told me that I was making a bad move professionally.” At times, the celebratory reaction of her colleagues has been even above and beyond what Sadie hoped for:

One woman that I work with has a very strong work ethic. I work very closely with her. Initially, I was a little uncomfortable about telling her that I was pregnant. When I told her, I actually thought that her reaction was great. It was in the context of a very stressful conversation about other things that were going on at work and I had to let her know that this was going to happen. I wasn't quite ready to tell people yet. I was going to tell people in a couple more weeks. But, just in the context, she needed to know that I was going to be gone for a while. So I told her. It definitely took her by surprise. It was not even on her radar screen that I was going to have a child. It was interesting because she actually sent me an email that night apologizing for not being as visibly excited as she could have been, just because of the nature of the rest of the conversation. That was interesting because I was actually very pleasantly surprised with how well the news was received.

Throughout Sadie's pregnancy and after her daughter's birth, Sadie's colleagues regularly asked about the baby. One of the departmental secretaries posted a photo of Sadie's daughter on a bulletin board.

As Sadie's baby girl has grown, Sadie's colleagues have continued to support her needs as the mother of a young child. Sadie described how her colleagues excused her from dinner with candidates during a faculty search:

When I was serving on a faculty search, we were asked to volunteer to attend the meals. I asked not to do the dinners. If I attended the dinners, I would not get to see the baby at home. People did not even bat an eye. I just did the lunches.



Allie's son was one year old when she began teaching at Prairie University. A year later, her son caught a virus which affected his kidneys. Allie described the support that she received from colleagues throughout her son's illness:

He was urinating blood. It sent us into total panic mode. All we cared about was him, of course. The dean knew about it. The department chair knew about it. I told my colleagues and everybody was very understanding. They said, "If you need to go to a doctor, go!" I could cancel a class or a colleague would cover the class for me. That support and understanding is most important. That was the best. . . . Nearly three years later, our son still struggles some with the effects from that illness. Colleagues still ask me how he is doing. They remember the sickness, and they still want to know how he is doing.

Though they may not appear collegial to outsiders, Sally's colleagues work together to help each other when illnesses and special needs arise. Sally described how faculty members generously cover classes for one another:

Within my department, I feel like I have had wonderful peers step up and help me. Our department, from the outside looking in, sometimes doesn't appear to be a very cohesive department. We don't do a lot of social things together. But when it comes down to helping each other with coverage for a class, we hardly ever cancel a class. Another faculty member almost always just steps up and helps with the class. That is without pay. That is just doing something extra to help somebody else. You can't ask for a better faculty than that.

The team spirit of her colleagues enabled Sally to take nine week maternity leaves when each of her three children was born. During each maternity leave, fellow faculty taught Sally's classes voluntarily for two weeks and then began receiving payment for teaching the classes.

**Departmental support of flexibility.** While watching an afternoon episode of *Oprah*, Ayana realized that a departmental culture which allows for flexibility can offer the best of the worlds of both working mothers and stay-at-home mothers. Ayana described her reaction to the talk show discussion:

On *Oprah*, they were having an argument about working women and women who stay at home. I am usually on the working women's side. My mother worked, and my grandmother helped raise us. I didn't realize that I actually have the best of both worlds. Except for Thursdays when I teach in the evenings, I answer the door every day when my daughter comes home from school. I am there when she comes home, but I am also working. I never realized that that is one of the good things about this job. It is flexible. We can sit down and eat dinner together. That has been good.

Other participants echoed Ayana's appreciation for the flexibility of their academic lives. Sally said, "This job is the best of both worlds. I have a professional career that I am devoted to and that I enjoy. But I also have flexibility—especially with summers and holidays off—to be involved with my kids." Allie enthused, "If I want to work nine months and not be in the office for three months, I can. Who else has that kind of gig?"

The flexibility of academic careers was the primary factor which drew Ayana to a career in the academy. After working temporary jobs while raising her newborn daughter, Ayana described her realization that she did not want to follow a career path with traditional working hours and vacation time:

I just couldn't see myself working a 9 to 5 job and having two weeks of vacation. That just seemed completely insane. I wanted to see what other types of work existed that would allow me to do what I wanted to do.

To Ayana, an academic career was an option that would allow her to spend more time with her daughter. Ayana concluded, "Having my daughter led me to the path that I ended up wanting to follow."

The flexibility of an academic career drove Sally to pursue a Ph.D. and earn tenure. Sally explained how her end goal of a career that allowed for time with her children pushed her through the difficult years of simultaneously teaching on the tenure track, completing Ph.D. coursework, and raising young children:

I was really motivated to [earn tenure] because I knew that I loved my kids more than anything in the world but I could not be a full-time stay-at-home mom. I need that professional outlet. This career allowed me to have that but still be with my kids every day right around the time that they get home from school. I leave home early in the morning, so I am able to leave a little bit earlier in the afternoon. I am home about a half hour after they get home from school. I still get to do all of the functions with my kids. If there is something big, like a preschool program, I have the flexibility to change my schedule and be there. That was my driving force—to be able to work professionally, but to also be an available mom. That was important to me.

As an annually contracted faculty member for one year, Greta realized the advantages of the flexibility in the academic calendar. Greta described the lure of the profession to her as a wife and mom:

Anybody who is lured to the teaching profession, whatever age you teach, enjoys the nine month contract with summers off. Professionally, that was definitely a draw. I think having that one year as an annually contracted faculty member sold me on the profession. Compared to what I was doing [as a counselor for abused women and children], this was a walk in the park. I loved it. It was work, but it never felt like work. I had so much of my own time, in comparison to what I had been doing. I think that the timing was attractive—the option to have summers off, the month at Christmas. Yet, I think professionally, I still present and do research. It is not always easy, but this allows me to have a professional career and still be a mom and a wife.

**Departmental support of autonomy.** In addition to appreciating the flexible hours of their academic careers, participants also valued the autonomy granted to them by their departments. Ayana, Sally, and Sarah discussed the benefits of working from home. Ayana, Sally, and Allie described how they exercise their freedom to decide what they will focus their attention on each day. Sally concluded, “As long as you do a good job and get your job done, you pretty much get the freedom to do it however you want.”

Ayana and Sally expressed their appreciation of the option to work from locations other than their university offices. After describing herself as someone who can’t focus in an area where people are talking, Ayana said, “[City University] is not the type of place where people expect you to be in the office. I never wanted to work in a place where I was stuck in the office.” As accepted by the culture of her institution, Ayana does all of her class preparation, research, and writing at home. The trusting relationship that Sally shares with her department chair allows her to work from home with frequency during the summer. Sally explained, “I have that trust from my chair that she knows that I am doing my job and that I am doing a good job”

During this year of separation from her husband, the freedom to work from home was absolutely critical for Sarah. Sarah explained how she was able to intertwine household and childcare responsibilities with research and writing:

The ability to work at home definitely made it easier to handle the domestic chores. That was one of the things that I realized as a single mom this year. Working at home meant that I could get up from the computer, do a load of laundry, go back and work again, get up from the computer and thaw something for dinner, go back and work again, get up from the computer and unload the dishwasher, go back and work again. I could be there when my son got home from school at 3:45 p.m. to feed him a snack and address whatever needs he had at that point. If he was home sick, I could be there.

Working from home allowed Sarah to address whatever “life stuff” was most critical on any given day. Sarah described how this reduced her stress and allowed her to work more efficiently:

It is so much less stressful to be able to just deal with the life stuff when it happens—to be able to go to the doctor when you need to go to the doctor, to be able to stop everything and pay bills when you need to pay bills, to be able to get groceries when you need to get groceries. I think it makes things more efficient in terms of getting work done. If you can deal with the stuff when it needs to get done, then you can focus and be efficient when you work.

During this past year, Sarah’s son suffered a stress fracture in his back, the most serious injury that he had ever incurred. As a result of his injury, Sarah’s son wore a back brace nearly 24 hours a day for three months. Sarah expressed doubt that she would have been able to

maintain a career with traditional hours in a customary office setting throughout her son's recovery period:

I don't think there was a single week this year that I worked literally a 9 to 5 week for any stretch. Because of how this year worked out, I don't think I was working anywhere close to 40 hours a week. There were weeks when we had five doctor appointments between his orthodontist, two physical therapy sessions per week, his back doctor, and my doctor. There were constant interruptions. There were days that were spent going from one appointment to another. If I was trapped at a physical office, it would have been bad for my son. I would have been fired. I just wouldn't have been able to do it. Reflecting on how her autonomy as a faculty member enabled her to balance career and family throughout her marital separation and her son's injury, Sarah concluded, "The lifestyle benefits [of an academic career] are huge. There is a lot of forgiveness in the whole thing."

Ayana, Sally, and Allie described their appreciation of their autonomy to decide what they will focus on each day. These participants valued their freedom to choose whether to focus on teaching or research on any given day, to create new classes that they were excited about teaching, and to pursue lines of research of particular interest to them. Sally summarized the collective feeling of the participants when she said, "I don't have somebody barking over my shoulder telling me exactly what to do every minute. The autonomy is great."

Allie and Sally talked about their autonomy to shift their focus between teaching and research. Allie described how she can let go of research to focus on teaching for a period of time and vice versa:

When I want to be a great teacher and focus on teaching, I can do that. I can just put the research down for a little while. If I really want to get more intense into my research, I have been teaching long enough that I can put that a little more on auto pilot and do that.

Similarly, Sally described her freedom to decide how she will do her job:

If I want to spend the next three days preparing for whatever, I can do that. If I want to do something different, I can do that, too. I really enjoy that. I enjoy being able to be free to make my own decisions about my job as far as how I am going to go about it.

Ayana and Allie appreciated opportunities to teach classes and research topics of particular interest to them. Ayana enjoyed the opportunity to develop new classes at City University. She explained, “I have freedom over what type of classes I want to teach. There are certain classes that I have to teach, but I have been able to create new classes around topics that I want to teach.” Throughout her son’s fight against the virus that affected his kidneys, Allie developed an interest in studying homeopathic remedies. Because a focus on research is secondary to a focus on teaching at Prairie University, Allie was allowed to follow that line of research, even though it was not potentially lucrative research. Allie explained how the culture of Prairie University supported her research interests:

[My husband and I] have been lucky in that we have been able to bring in a lot of grants, even though there isn’t pressure here to do that. I’ve been able to pursue studies that I would never have done someplace else because there was no money in the studies. We have been using homeopathy to treat the virus which affected our son’s kidneys. I have become more interested in that and have been doing that on the side, too. That is academic as well. I have been able to branch into some things that I would not have been able to branch into otherwise. You can’t beat that freedom.

### **Sharing 50/50 at Home**

Strikingly, all five participants in this study who were living with a partner described household and childcare responsibilities as evenly split. Each family's situation was unique, but couples worked together to meet the needs of their family accordingly. Allie and her husband staggered their teaching schedules to allow one of them to take their son to the daycare center and the other one to pick him up earlier in the afternoon; adjoining faculty offices allowed Allie and her husband to juggle transportation to their son's tumbling, karate, and swimming lessons. Although Sadie and her partner met many childcare responsibilities together, they also divided some duties according to their individual preferences. While Greta taught night classes, her husband was responsible for bath time, bedtime stories, and prayers with their three children. Sally's husband and Emily's husband took care of all nighttime parental responsibilities while their wives took evening classes to pursue Ph.D.s. Allie, Sadie, Sally, and Emily each talked about their partners assisting with laundry; Allie went so far as to say that she hasn't done laundry since the 1990s! Greta credited her husband with helping her to maintain her sanity by taking out the garbage, putting dinner dishes into the dishwasher, and picking up the house. Emily expressed the appreciation of most, if not all of these women when she said, "If it weren't for my [partner], I would not be able to do this."

Though Allie and her husband sometimes joke about their adjoining offices, the couple's close proximity facilitates their ability to meet the needs of their son. According to Allie, "We joke around about having offices right next to each other, but it's a godsend. We can talk about who is going to pick up our son." Allie explained how her husband's involvement has naturally increased as their son has gotten older:



The first two years was all me. Weaning that kid was like bloody murder! (She laughs.)

It was all me, all the time! Once he was weaned, I was like, “Okay, you can take care of him now!” (She laughs.) Now that he’s a little boy, I get a lot more downtime than I used to. We do a lot of juggling with tumbling, karate, and swimming lessons.

Allie and her husband schedule their teaching times to minimize the amount of time that their son is at the daycare center. Typically, Allie’s husband teaches later classes so that he can take their son to daycare. Allie teaches earlier classes to allow her to pick up their son earlier in the afternoon. Allie’s husband assists with household responsibilities just as he helps with the care of their son. With a smile, Allie proclaimed, “I haven’t done laundry since the 1990s!”

Sadie and her partner distribute household and childcare responsibilities according to their individual preferences. According to Sadie, “I feel it is a pretty fair divide that has just naturally happened.” Sadie described the distribution of household responsibilities in their home:

Housework is fairly well-divided. My partner doesn’t like dirt, and I don’t like lack of organization. So she does things like laundry, vacuuming, and bathroom cleaning. I keep the house neat, put laundry away, and keep the kitchen tidy. I really enjoy being in the kitchen, so I do more of the cooking. It works out pretty well.

Although Sadie and her partner “do a lot of things together” with their daughter, they also split some responsibilities. Sadie explained, “My partner does bath, and then I put the baby to bed. My partner gets her dressed; I give her breakfast. I make her lunch; my partner washes her bottles.” Speaking of their shared responsibilities, Sadie concluded, “It works well.”

Describing her husband as “50% in,” Greta explained how he takes over childcare and household responsibilities when he returns home at about 6:00 p.m.:

Because I teach in the evenings, he has the kids. Usually the sitter will feed them, so he doesn't have to make dinner, per se. But he does baths, bedtime stories, praying, and that kind of stuff. In addition to that, we divvy up our household tasks—taking out the garbage, giving the dog his medication, putting the dinner dishes in the dishwasher, and picking up the house. This is sanity to me. I don't want to have to pick up the dinner dishes and put away the toys when I get home at 10:00 p.m.

When Sally was in the midst of the tenure track and her Ph.D. coursework, her husband accepted primary responsibility for childcare and household responsibilities. Sally described her husband's role during those critical years:

He has always helped a lot at home, but he especially helped through those times. He was the primary housekeeper. He did laundry. He made supper. He gave the children baths. He just did it. He had to because I wasn't there. . . . Other people looking in say things like, "Oh my gosh! I can't believe that you can get your husband to do laundry!" Well, he does more than I do now. He knows that it needs done, so he gets it done.

Now that she has completed her Ph.D. coursework, the involvement of Sally's husband is still critical to her success as a faculty member. Sally explained the role that her husband continues to play:

Even in my career now, there are lots of times when I have evening meetings. I am one of the sponsors for the departmental honors club. All of our meetings are in the evenings, and we have activities in the evenings. I still need that support system at home to help with my kids—to make sure that they are safe, fed, and cared for. If I didn't have that, I wouldn't be able to be here. I would have to do something else.

Emily described a “kick butt, awesome husband” as essential to balancing career and family. Though his approach may differ from Emily’s, Emily described how her husband accepts significant responsibility for household and childcare responsibilities during the academic year:

He is the primary cook. He does the laundry. The laundry might not be folded. It might just be thrown in the basket, but it’s done. He gets the kids in bed. Granted, he might not get them in bed at their bedtime. His rules are a lot more relaxed, but he gets it done in his own way. I couldn’t ask for anything more.

Whenever she is given an opportunity, Emily recognizes the support of her husband. According to Emily:

Anytime anyone asks how I was able to get this done, I say that I could not have done it without the support of my husband. At our athletic banquets, they always say, “Thank you to our athletic trainer. Do you have anything that you would like to say?” I say, “Thank you to the parents and the students for being good to work with. I would also like to let you know that if it wasn’t for my husband, I would not be able to do this.”

Like Emily, Sally and Greta also shared how their husbands have benefitted from opportunities to parent in their own unique ways. Sally’s husband had the opportunity to develop his own routines with the children while Sally was taking her Ph.D. coursework in the evenings:

[My Ph.D. studies] gave my husband a lot of one-on-one time with the kids that he may not have had otherwise because I am kind of an overbearing parent. (She laughs.) It was nice for him to get that opportunity. The kids know now that Dad does things differently

than Mom does and that it's okay. I've loosened up quite a bit on my regime. I used to like things done one way. Now I don't care how it gets done as long as it gets done.

Greta recognized how the night classes that she taught granted freedom to her husband:

I think it's been interesting to see how my career has helped him to become a self-sufficient parent. If I was at home, I would probably do most of that work. I would bathe the kids the way that I thought they should be bathed. I would say, "That's a little wild. Let's do it this way." He's free to do things as a dad the way that he wants to do them. That has been a great thing for a marriage. It has been a great thing for our kids.

Though the amount of support received by all five participants living with partners is exciting, it is worthy of note that Kay and Sarah likely would not have received such support if they had been living with their husbands. After asking American friends about how husbands and wives divide family responsibilities, Kay concluded, "As I hear more and more about it, I feel like there is no way that I can ask these things of my husband." Referring to her husband's traditional Korean beliefs, Kay explained, "Taking care of responsibilities inside the family is the wife's responsibility." When Sarah and her husband were living together before Sarah's fellowship on the East Coast, they fought about domestic chores. Sarah described how arguments were heated at times:

We got pretty adversarial about it. We are both pretty interested in having a lot of time to ourselves. I want to work all the time, and he wants to read his books all the time. We would go back and forth saying, "You walk the dog. No, *you* walk the dog! No, *you* walk the dog!" . . . There was a constant sort of grind about on whose back everything was going to rest.

Because Kay's lack of support from her husband on domestic responsibilities was reflective of their cultural beliefs, Kay was not bothered by the lack of support. Kay shared, "I feel like I really want to be helpful to him so that he can be very successful." Conversely, disagreement over the sharing of childcare and household responsibilities contributed to the marital discord and separation of Sarah and her husband.

### **Outside Support Systems**

Though five participants enjoyed the primary assistance of partners who accepted responsibility for at least half of the household and childcare responsibilities, they also recognized secondary support systems that helped them to manage work and family responsibilities. Secondary support systems included grandparents, babysitters and daycare providers, parents of other children, and cleaning services. For the participants who were not living with a partner, these secondary support systems were absolutely indispensable.

**Grandparents.** Kay, Ayana, and Sally received help with childcare from their parents. During the three years that Kay commuted to Prairie University and was away from her daughters from Tuesday morning to Thursday night, Kay's parents and her husband's parents were among the babysitters who helped take care of the girls. Kay explained, "In our culture, the parents do that kind of thing." Ayana's mother welcomed her granddaughter to her home for two months every summer so that Ayana could focus on research and publications. Sally's parents regularly picked up their grandchildren from daycare and fed them supper so that Sally's husband did not miss evening meetings with customers, an essential component of his career in sales.

As a single mother, the time that Ayana has to research, write, and publish during the academic year is limited by the amount of time that she spends with her teenage daughter and on

household responsibilities. Ayana explained her commitment to her daughter on evenings and weekends:

If [my daughter] is number one in my life, I am not going to be in the office late every night when I have a teenager at home. A child needs attention. If I am the only one who can give her that attention, I am not going to be in the office late every night. I am not going to be in my office every evening and weekend, like some of my colleagues.

Without a partner to help, Ayana explained how her time is also consumed by daily chores:

Last year, the semester started and I found myself cooking, cleaning, and mowing the grass. I found myself doing everything and then trying to figure out how I was going to work a little bit on the weekend. It's not going to happen.

Ayana's mother serves as a critical support system for Ayana during the summers.

Ayana's daughter spends about two months living with her grandmother in a major city more than four hours away, giving Ayana a significant block of time to focus on research activities.

Ayana explained, "I have the summer to get out whatever I need to. That is how I play catch up."

While Sally was teaching on the tenure track at Prairie University and pursuing her Ph.D., her parents tag teamed with her husband to take care of their children. Sally recalled, "My mom would call and say, 'I'm going to pick up the kids tonight and cook dinner for them.'" Though Sally's parents were divorced, her father also helped with the children. According to Sally, "There were lots of nights when my dad would pick up the kids, take them to his house, and feed them supper. When my husband got off work, he went to my dad's house and had supper with them." Sally recognized that she would not have been able to pursue a Ph.D. without the support and commitment of her parents:

I could not have done any of it without my parents. Even as much as my husband was helpful and did as much as he possibly could, his job demanded a lot of him. He is in sales, and you have to be there when the customers come. It is very difficult to say, “I have to go pick up my two-year-old.” You could lose sales. We depended on my parents a lot of times. I could not have done it at all without the help of my husband, my mom, and my dad.

Sally’s children loved spending extra time with their grandparents while Sally was taking classes. According to Sally, “They loved it! It was like a vacation to them because they didn’t have to come home and go through the same routine.”

**Babysitters and daycare providers.** Kay, Greta, and Emily emphasized the importance of babysitters or daycare providers to their success as academic mothers. Both Kay and Greta hired university students as babysitters. Emily met her children’s daycare provider through a family connection.

During the two years that Kay and her daughters lived near Prairie University, Kay hired domestic and international university students as babysitters. One babysitter, an international graduate student from Korea, was particularly special to Kay’s family. Kay recalled, “She was very heavily handicapped, and I think my children learned a lot from her.” When one of Kay’s daughters was sick, she hired a babysitter for the day. Kay shared, “I never took a day off from work because of the children being sick.”

Because Greta teaches evening classes, she is able to be at home with her children until about 3:00 p.m. Greta and her husband hire a university student to babysit the children from the time Greta leaves for work until her husband gets home from work at about 6:00 p.m. Greta explained how she finds babysitters to meet the needs of her family:

When I was a student here, I was always looking for a job. I try to pay that forward. I try to employ students. I look for someone from the College of Education who wants a job and has a car to get to my house. I put an ad in the student newspaper. Every time I place an ad, I get phone calls from 70 to 80 girls. The number of students wanting a babysitting job is unbelievable!

When Greta must attend meetings outside of those late afternoon hours or her husband travels on business, Greta's regular babysitter covers the extra hours, or she hires an additional sitter.

Emily recognized the importance of the support that her family received from their daycare provider. Emily described how their daycare provider became an extension of their family:

Our daycare provider helps us a lot. We were able to get into this daycare because my little sister and the daycare provider's daughter were best friends in graduate school. She has kind of adopted our children as a third set of grandchildren. She helps us out quite a bit. She will bail us out if we really need some help. If my husband is running late, she will stay with the kids.

**Parents of other children.** As the only participants in this study with teenage children, Ayana and Sarah received support from the parents of other children. Before her daughter earned a driver's license, Ayana relied on other parents to take her daughter home after track practice on Thursday nights. Relationships with preschool families cultivated more than a decade ago continued to serve as a primary support system for Sarah.

Throughout high school, Ayana's daughter competed on the track team. When Ayana taught Thursday evening classes, she faced the challenge of finding a ride home from track



practice for her daughter. Typically, Ayana received support from parents of another member of the track team who lived near Ayana's neighborhood.

When Sarah began teaching at City University, she enrolled her son in a private childcare center which was founded by academic women in the 1970s. With time, the families at that childcare center, nearly all of whom were dual career families, created "networks of reciprocity." Sarah explained how the families devised a system to help one another with after-school care when their children started elementary school:

We came up with an exchange with preschool families. We traded off after-school care for years. One family could cover one day a week; another family would cover another day a week. The boys got to have play dates after school.

Though the families ended their after-school care arrangements last year, the families remain close. According to Sarah, "The children had a lot in common, and we had a lot in common with the other parents. The whole set of families that we met from the childcare center is still friends. The children were all four years old together; now they are 13 years old together. On the evening of my interview with Sarah, her son was on a hiking trip with the friends he met in preschool.

Like Sarah, Sadie and her partner are starting to develop relationships with the parents of other children at their daughter's daycare. Shortly before our interview, another mother offered to watch Sadie's daughter so that Sadie could pack boxes in preparation to move to their new house. Sadie explained this budding support system:

We've just become friendlier with a mom of another little girl who is in daycare with ours. She has offered to help with babysitting so that we can pack. I think that could help me free up work time. These two little girls have been in daycare together since

they were three months old. It's funny to see that they are, in a baby way, becoming buddies. I don't feel guilty if she goes over to the other little girl's house for two hours because I think she is having fun.

Sadie is hopeful that these relationships will develop into a support system beyond the support system that she and her partner are able to provide for one another.

**Cleaning services.** Both Sally and Sarah hired someone to help with housecleaning on a regular basis. Used to being a "meticulous" housekeeper, Sally could not maintain her cleaning schedule after she began her Ph.D. coursework. Because Sally missed having a clean house and her husband had taken on so many other household and childcare responsibilities, Sally's family chose to eat out less so that they could afford to hire somebody to help with housecleaning. Even after Sally has completed her coursework, she continues to hire someone to assist with housecleaning. Laughing, Sally explained, "I haven't given her up! I can't do without her! We enjoy coming home to a very clean house a couple of times a month when we know that we didn't have to clean it!" Recognizing a housecleaning service as a "luxury" that she has been able to afford since getting further along in her career, Sarah acknowledged, "As long as I can possibly help it, I will never again go without having paid housecleaning."

### **Challenges**

Though the participants in this study generally embraced their dual roles as academic professionals and as mothers, they certainly still wrestled with challenges. Participants described hidden pregnancies and pregnancy discrimination, ignorance regarding maternity benefits, lack of institutional commitment to partner hires, scarce availability of childcare, limited availability of mentors, and struggles teaching evening classes.

**Hidden pregnancies and pregnancy discrimination.** Allie and Kay both interviewed for tenure-track positions at Prairie University when they were six months pregnant; neither one mentioned her pregnancy to the hiring committee. Allie shared, “When I was interviewing, I didn’t tell anybody I was pregnant. I just didn’t think that was something to mention if I didn’t have to. I could hide it pretty well.” Kay sought counsel from one of her former professors:

I asked my major professor if I should let the department know that I was pregnant when I went for interviews. He told me that I did not have to talk about that. I lived in America for five years as a graduate student and for two years as a post-doc, but I had no idea how the society worked. I was a little concerned that the pregnancy would be an issue.

Like Allie, Kay’s size allowed her to hide her pregnancy during interviews. According to Kay, “I am a very small person, so nobody noticed that I was pregnant.” When Kay’s daughter was born less than two months before her start date at Prairie University, Kay’s husband sent an electronic birth announcement to Kay’s soon-to-be colleagues. Kay recalled, “People were very surprised here when my husband sent an email to the department to say that the baby was born!”

Near the end of Allie’s second day of interviews, she noticed that she was bleeding. Allie recalled how she continued as if everything was normal:

It started right before I gave my seminar, which was on the second day. I emailed my husband and asked him to make an appointment with the OB for when I got back home. There was just a little bit of blood. I thought that everything would be okay. In retrospect, I’m an idiot.

Even after four years at Prairie University and the receipt of tenure, Allie has shared the story of her interview experience with few people. When she returned home and had an appointment

with her obstetrician, Allie learned that the bleeding was prompted by the hours that Allie spent on her feet during the interview process.

Allie did not initially accept the position at Prairie University because the department did not have a position available for her husband. As Allie continued her search for a tenure-track position, she learned that her hesitancy to disclose maternal matters was well-warranted at some institutions.

Two months after the birth of her son, Allie interviewed at a Southern research university which was linked to the federal ecology lab at which she and her husband had previously worked. Because her son was exclusively breastfeeding, Allie requested that nursing breaks be incorporated into her interview schedule, and Allie's husband accompanied her to the interviews to care for their son. After interviewing, Allie was told by former colleagues that she was not offered the position because of her needs as a mother. Allie recalled her reaction to that news:

Because I know people in that department, I know for a fact that I did not get that job because of the nursing situation. I could have sued, but what was that going to get me? I don't want to be in a department that functions like that.

A few months after her interview at the Southern research university, Allie returned to Prairie University for a second interview. This time, Allie's husband also interviewed for a tenure-track position. Allie explained how her experience as a breastfeeding candidate at Prairie University was significantly different than her experience at the Southern research university:

At [Prairie University], they were great. They dropped us off at the hotel. One committee member said, "Oh, let me see the baby!" It was totally a nonissue here. It was totally different than at [the Southern research university]. At [the Southern research university] the dean looked at me like, "Oh my god!" I told them right up front when

they invited me for an interview that I had a newborn baby and that I would need nursing breaks. My host was a young man who also had a young child. He was totally cool about it. No big deal. But the old-fashioned forestry guys in the department [at the Southern research university] and the dean could not handle it. I thought that they were disgusted. They couldn't handle it. As a wildlife instructor, I am in a field that is almost all men. If I would have brought my gun, then I think everybody would have been all right.

**Information regarding maternity benefits.** The only participant in this study who expressed an appreciation for her institution's maternity benefits was Sadie. Rolling Hills University's policy enabling faculty to stop the tenure clock for one year following the birth of a child and an institutional culture which advertised and wholeheartedly supported the use of that policy allowed Sadie to enjoy her baby girl's first year rather than pushing out publications to build her tenure portfolio. Although stopping the tenure clock after the birth of a child is an option at Prairie University, none of the participants from that institution were aware of the option. Kay and Greta were not even familiar with the minimal maternity benefits offered by the Family and Medical Leave Act. Sarah recognized that poor maternity benefits drove one of her colleagues away from City University.

Collectively, the participants at Prairie University gave birth to seven babies while employed by the institution. Sally gave birth to three babies; Emily and Greta each gave birth to two babies. Though they did not give birth while employed at Prairie University, Kay and Allie both had young children when they began teaching at the university. Kay's daughters were two years old and two months old; Allie's son was one year old. None of these women were aware

that the contract for tenure-track faculty at Prairie University offers the option to stop the tenure clock after the birth of a child.

When Kay began teaching at Prairie University, her younger daughter was less than two months old. Though Kay did not feel that she was physically ready to return to work that soon, she did not know what, if any, maternity benefits were available at the institution. Kay explained her recommendations for improving the faculty orientation process:

The orientation for new faculty focused on the facilities. I was afraid to ask what benefits might be available. I was afraid to ask about leave. I didn't know what type of department chair we had. I did not know what the working environment was like. I think it would be very helpful, especially for women with children, for there to be information about maternity leaves and those kinds of things shared at orientation. Women need to know how maternity affects the tenure process and the evaluation process.

Although Kay attributed some of her lack of knowledge regarding maternity benefits to being an international faculty member, Greta was not aware of her options either. Greta's youngest two children were born while she was on the tenure track at Prairie University. Greta shared, "I don't even know what my maternity leave options were. I know that I had an option, but I don't know what it was. I never looked into it." Greta gave birth to a son two months shy of her first anniversary as a tenure-track faculty member at the university. Her son was born in mid-June; Greta returned in July to teach a summer school class. Greta's daughter was born two years later at the end of April. Following the birth of her daughter, Greta taught two summer school classes in a weekend format. The first class met for three weekends in June; the second class met for three weekends in July. Greta insisted that her decision to teach summer school so soon after the births of her children was entirely voluntary. She explained, "I am very high

energy, so that may be why I did it. I am always on the go, always busy.” Greta also recognized how her swift return was facilitated by uncomplicated deliveries:

If there had been complications with the births of any of my children, that would have been a very different experience. I was blessed. My children were healthy, and I was healthy. In that way, all of this could be possible.

Greta noted that she would have asked for more details regarding maternity leaves if she would have had an unexpected cesarean section during either of her deliveries.

Because Sarah’s son was in preschool when she began the tenure track at City University and she did not desire a second child, the university’s maternity benefits did not affect Sarah’s career. Sarah was quick, however, to stress the need for improved maternity benefits at City University. To demonstrate how improved benefits would facilitate the recruitment and retention of talented women faculty, Sarah shared the story of a colleague:

You basically cannot get a full semester off at full pay, no matter what you do. You can have a really short amount of time off at full pay, or you can have a full semester off at half pay. But you can’t really have long enough at full pay to actually deal with having a baby. That is the reason why one of my close friends here left and went to a private school where they had actual maternity benefits. Since leaving, she has had two kids. She needed those maternity benefits!

Sadie’s experience, though rare amongst participants, is demonstrative of the positive effect of maternity benefits that go beyond the requirements of the Family and Medical Leave Act. Rolling Hills University offers new parents the option to stop the tenure clock and also offers a six week paid maternity leave. Since Sadie’s daughter was born during the summer, months when she is off contract, Sadie did not benefit from the paid maternity leave. She did,

however, exercise the option to stop the tenure clock for one year. Sadie explained how new faculty were informed about available benefits and encouraged to utilize them:

From the time I started at the university, we have had annual meetings with tenured professors. The provost's office sets this up. From the get-go, they have let us know about this option. They made it very clear that we would not be held to a higher standard if we chose to stop the clock. We would not be expected to have more written since we were at the university for six years instead of five. They made it very clear that it is as if that year really wasn't there.

Sadie's academic dean and department chair encouraged her to utilize the option to stop the tenure clock so that she could enjoy time with her baby. According to Sadie, "They encouraged me to take the pressure off myself in terms of writing." After a few months, Sadie realized that she wasn't returning to her research and writing with the vigor that she anticipated, and she exercised her option to stop the tenure clock. Sadie recalled, "Once I made the decision to stop the clock, I didn't worry about [writing]. I spent all weekend with the baby. By taking out the need to write, I was still able to enjoy her." For Sadie, having the option to stop the tenure clock was "very helpful."

**Commitment to partner hires.** The experiences of Allie, whose husband has a Ph.D. in ecology, and Sarah, whose husband has a Ph.D. in sociology, are indicative of the struggles of academic couples. After two rounds of interviews nearly a year apart, Allie and her husband were both offered tenure-track positions in the same department at Prairie University. Their son is thriving, Allie has earned tenure, and her husband is just one year shy of tenure. Though they were among the lucky academic couples, Allie recalled the tepid welcome that she and her husband received from another couple within the department and stressed the need for



administrators to do a better job of explaining the importance of dual hires. Sarah and her husband were not so fortunate. While Sarah followed the tenure track at City University, her husband bounced around from job to job and dealt with unemployment for an extended period of time. Sarah's husband's struggle to find meaningful work was detrimental to their marriage and ultimately became a factor in Sarah's decision to leave the university.

When Allie and her husband arrived together as tenure-track faculty at Prairie University, the welcome that they received from other dual career couples was lukewarm at best. Allie attempted to sort through that dynamic:

There were people in this department that didn't want my husband and me to be here because it was a different sort of hiring. I had seen it at the research university at which we previously taught, too. What is so surprising is that usually the people who are really intense about it are the couples who were already in the department. The couple that was already in this department [at Prairie University] was the most intense about not wanting us to be hired. Maybe it delegitimizes how their spouse was hired.

Allie explained the increasing importance of universities finding room for dual career couples and discussing the value of such hires with other faculty:

Would I come to [Prairie University] if I were single? No. I wouldn't want to live in the middle of a cornfield and work at a strapped state institution! But there are reasons why we are here and why we are very happy to be here. [Prairie University] needs to address that more. I have seen advertisements for places like New York that encourage couples to apply. I don't think we need to do that, but we can't be surprised when we go into negotiations with dual career couples. When we have women achieving Ph.D.s, most often they are going to meet their husbands through school. Quite often, you are going to

have [dual hiring] situations. . . . My husband and I can prove ourselves by our accomplishments, but it's not right for dual career couples to have to do that for their colleagues when they come into the institution. The old mode of academia where it is going to be a ring match for every position is not the way that it is going to be anymore. You are going to get some package deals. The administration should be up front talking about this with faculty. From what I have heard, in our case, the administration wasn't as up front in talking about it. They just said, "Oh, well, we're getting them both." There was dialogue, but the dialogue wasn't good enough.

As Sarah prepared to leave City University to move to a different Midwestern research university, she recognized the role that her husband's career played in her decision to accept a different position. Sarah shared, "I probably would not be leaving this university if it had originally done better by my husband." Like Sarah, her husband has a Ph.D. in sociology. He also has self-taught skills in computer programming. Sarah summarized how her husband bounced around trying to find a stable job near City University:

He eventually got a job with a software company in a city an hour away and worked there for a year. Commuting did not work out very well. It was awful. He ended up staying in the city during the week because he is not the kind of person who can do that kind of driving back and forth every day. Then he came back here. Through our daycare connections, he ended up getting a soft money job in the chemistry department. That was fine, except that it was underpaid, had poor working conditions, and had no job security. He decided to quit that job to start writing a book. In retrospect, the idea about writing a book was really just something to cover the fact that he was struggling to come to terms with the reality that there was no work in this area for him.

Sarah's husband was unemployed for a couple of years. When Sarah's family moved to the East Coast for her Ivy League fellowship, her husband finally found stable employment that he enjoyed. When Sarah and her son returned to City University after the conclusion of her fellowship, her husband continued living on the East Coast so that he could continue with his employment.

When Sarah moves to her new university, her husband will move to be with Sarah and their son. For an unknown length of time, Sarah's husband will be able to keep his job with the company on the East Coast by telecommuting. Long-term, Sarah is hopeful that there will be more career opportunities for her husband around the location of her new institution than there were around City University. Noting that her new institution includes an engineering school and a medical school, Sarah said, "There is more investment going on in terms of the future in his area."

Sarah recognized the toll that her husband's struggle to find employment took on their marriage, nearly ending it. She expressed a sense of hopefulness that moving to a new institution which would offer better opportunities to them as a dual career couple might serve as balm on a decade of struggle and hurt:

If our marriage survives this next transition and gets better, which it might or might not, I think at that point we will have finally gotten over what it meant that my job brought us [to City University]. It was a disastrous situation for my husband's career. We will finally have gotten over that after a decade.

Sarah and her husband's struggle as a dual career couple at City University was not unique. She explained how the university ignored the needs of partners and subsequently missed opportunities to hire talented professionals:

[The university] basically takes it for granted, more or less, that people will move here and get jobs—that it doesn't matter what happens to the partner's job. This is really a place where partners' careers go to die. I know so many people in the department and on campus whose partner, male or female, is shockingly underemployed. You would think that the university would realize that it could do a much better job of retaining faculty if it addressed the needs of dual career couples. You would think that the university would realize that there is a vast amount of human capital that is underused. There are talented people with Ph.D.s who are just sitting around playing *Mind Sweeper*!

**Availability of childcare.** When Sarah was offered a position at City University, she immediately requested that her son be added to the waiting list for the university's childcare center. Sarah assumed that a spot would open before she began teaching. After waiting for a few months, Sarah decided to inquire about the likelihood that her son would be able to attend the center. She recalled, "I realized that my son would be in college before I got a slot!"

Sarah and her husband visited City University during the spring prior to their move. Because the length of their visit was limited, Sarah explained how purchasing a house became a secondary priority behind finding a childcare center for their son:

When we came and visited campus in the spring before moving here, it was much harder to find a spot in childcare than it was to find a house to buy. It was so much more stressful! We were here for a very short visit to find childcare and purchase a house. When it came to buying the house, we pretty much just thought, "Okay, whatever. This will do." We had to spend most of our time trying to find private childcare. We realized that the university wasn't going to be able to solve that problem.

At times during their search, Sarah doubted whether they would be able to find a daycare center with an opening for her son, and she thought about the irony of her predicament:

I remember thinking, “This is just really stupid. They have hired me to do this job. The base line starting condition for me to be able to do my work is to have childcare.” I was really, really not sure whether there was going to be any childcare available at all in any form in the entire city in time for me to start work.

Though Sarah ultimately found an opening in a childcare center for her son and the families at that center became the primary support system for Sarah’s family, she has not forgotten her initial struggle. Sarah concluded, “As my mother would say, these things do tend to work out. But the fact was that it seemed like there was no one who was even concerned about it. The institution just did not get it!”

Though they were able to meet their childcare needs, participants at Prairie University recommended that the university consider building an on-campus childcare facility. Allie shared, “I guess they are talking about getting a daycare started here. I think they should. That would just bring it on home regarding support for families with children.” Kay echoed Allie’s thoughts when she said, “I think it would be a good consideration. It would show that there was support in place for people with children.” Similarly, Greta suggested, “It might help faculty to make a decision to come here if, in their minds, they could offset lower pay with the existence of a childcare facility.”

**Mentors.** In regards to the availability and quality of mentoring, the participants in this study had vastly different experiences. Neither Kay nor Emily had a faculty mentor, and they both expressed a desire to have someone to reach out to for feedback and suggestions. Kay desired advice from a more experienced colleague with knowledge about maternity benefits,

teaching strategies, and evaluation forms. Emily wished that there was a group of other faculty mothers with young children that she could turn to as a sounding board. Although Greta was formally matched with a senior colleague through a mentoring program for new faculty at Prairie University, she also expressed a need to share ideas and experiences with younger women who were at a similar stage in life. Sally and Sadie benefitted from informal mentoring relationships that they developed with senior women colleagues with children. Sarah learned from several senior colleagues who guided her through the beginning steps of classroom teaching and offered feedback on publication drafts.

When Kay was hired by Prairie University, she had no understanding of the Family and Medical Leave Act, nor was she familiar with strategies for classroom teaching. Kay explained how having a mentor would have helped her to learn about maternity benefits at the university:

We do not have many women faculty members in our department. There are not many people around that you can ask about [maternity benefits]. It probably would have been a lot easier for me if I would have had a mentor to talk to.

For Kay, having someone to talk to about benefits would have been even more important than the actual benefits. According to Kay, “I think that the emotional support is more important than the physical support. I needed a channel for gaining information about what was available and what was acceptable.”

A mentor would have also helped Kay to understand classroom teaching:

Because of my background in research environments, I did not know much about what teaching looked like. I did not know what kind of students were at [Prairie University]. I learned that by working with the students, but I really wish that I would have had people with whom I could have talked about typical groups of students, forms of evaluation for

students, and things like that. It would have been much nicer if I would have had a chance to talk with someone about those kinds of things.

Though Greta participated in a faculty mentoring program when she embarked on her career at Prairie University, her mentor did not offer the type of hands-on realistic advice that Greta needed to work through her daily challenges. Greta explained how her mentor offered her praise, rather than suggestions:

My mentor was a great woman who was nearing retirement. She had children when she was a faculty member. We talked some about it. But, I got the statements like, “I just don’t know how you are doing it. It’s just amazing that you can get all this stuff done.” This is nice, but it is not effective or helpful.

Because of her desire for an informal setting in which academic mothers could share helpful tips with one another, Greta has contemplated initiating a series of brown bag lunches. Greta described how those lunches might create an opportunity for women to share similar experiences:

I think it would be helpful to just get together to vent a little bit. In my department, I am the only tenure-track faculty member with children. We have one annually contracted faculty member who has one child, but nobody else has young children. In meetings, I have asked things like, “If we are going to meet again next Wednesday, could we please decide that today?” I will say things that don’t even cross their minds. Or, I will ask, “Are we bringing food to this meeting, or are we not bringing food?” Or, “Do you think this will last two hours or four hours?” Some people will say, “We’ll just see how it goes.” No, I can’t do that! I think I’m a little more time-fixated because I have kids. There is an isolation factor with that. The brown bag could be a more helpful way to be

able to talk with people having similar experiences. It would be nice to have other people say, “Yeah, that was hard for me, too.”

Emily might have benefitted from the brown bag lunch series proposed by Greta. Like Greta, Emily expressed a desire to seek suggestions from other young mothers:

There were two senior faculty members [in our department] who were women with children, but they were approaching retirement. There was not anybody my age to whom I could turn. It was just me. Sometimes I wished that I just had somebody to turn to as a sounding board. All of our newer faculty that are on the tenure track are male.

Sally described the potentially empowering benefits of having a faculty mentor. As a new faculty member, Sally shared an adjoining office with a more senior female faculty member with children. Sally explained the importance of that relationship:

She went through the same Ph.D. program at the same research university. We worked in an adult fitness program together, so she knew what that was like. She was my biggest anchor. I could ask her how to do things. She had a lot of very good perspectives on things. I relied very heavily on her. She guided me through a lot of things.

Sally also sought mentoring from other colleagues within her department. Because Sally had never taught before, she sought advice from more experienced faculty:

I frequently relied on other faculty for coursework information. I asked to see their syllabus and things like that. I didn’t have a background in teaching, so I didn’t know what I was doing. I didn’t know how to set up a semester or a syllabus. There was so much to learn, so I talked to people constantly and asked questions. I sought out people who had taught similar classes in the past and tried to learn as much as I could from them and adapt that to my needs and the needs of my students.



Like Sally, Sadie benefitted from the mentoring of a senior faculty colleague who was the mother of grown children. Sadie expressed her appreciation for having a colleague who understood her struggles and was able to offer candid advice:

The woman in our program with two grown children definitely struggled throughout her career to try to find some type of balance. She is someone who gets it. She and I are close. It is nice to have someone else in the program who gets it. While my other colleagues in the program are embracing, they don't get it. She can say things like, "You really have to get this written. I know it's hard." It's been nice to have that.

While on the tenure track at City University, Sarah benefitted from the wisdom of senior colleagues. Sarah described how her colleagues mentored her regarding a wide spectrum of topics:

My senior colleagues here are just amazing, wonderful people. They took really good care of me and helped me with everything from deciding how many readings to assign each week to how to handle a student death. I could show them six papers that I was working on for tenure and ask which one I should work on first.

Sarah described a particular colleague, a man without children, who worked "all the time" and how he was able and willing to offer Sarah swift feedback:

If I managed to go to the office on the weekends, which I actually did a lot, that colleague would be there. I wouldn't have to wait to ask for advice. If I needed to consult, he would be there. He works super, super fast, so he can turn things around very quickly. I could ask him to read things or respond to things, and he would do it very quickly.

Sarah is hopeful that her colleagues at her new institution will be as supportive, but she also recognizes that "being tenured, I don't need them to be great quite as much."

**Evening classes.** Kay, Sadie, and Greta spoke of the challenges associated with teaching evening classes while raising young children. Kay changed her area of concentration so that she could teach daytime classes and be at home with her daughters during the evenings. Sadie dreaded a new night class that she was scheduled to teach because it meant that she would not see her daughter awake on those nights. Greta had begun to think about future conflicts between her evening teaching schedule and her children's extracurricular activities. Similar to the three participants with younger children, Ayana discussed the challenge of finding a ride home for her daughter from track practice on the night that she taught.

Because Prairie University tends to offer math education courses for secondary education teachers in the evenings, Kay changed her area of focus from secondary education to elementary education. Kay explained, "I prefer teaching secondary math education courses, but those classes are typically offered late in the day or in the evenings. I switched my area of focus because of the schedule."

At the time of our interview, Sadie was dreading teaching a night class during the upcoming semester. Because Sadie's department is initiating a Ph.D. program, she is scheduled to teach a night class on Tuesdays starting at 6:00 p.m. Because Sadie's daughter will be asleep before she returns home from class, Sadie explained how she hopes to spend extra time with her daughter on Tuesday mornings:

In my ideal world, I will keep my daughter home until 10:00 a.m. on the day that I teach the night class so that I can at least see her for a little bit. Then I will take her to daycare and drive to campus. I am already thinking about blocking off Tuesdays until 11:00 a.m. Will that happen every Tuesday? No, but I am trying my best to do that. Now, of course

in the back of my mind, I'm thinking, "That's just less work that you are going to get done." But I don't think I could go every Tuesday without seeing her.

Sadie plans to talk with her students on the first day of class and ask if they would be able to meet earlier. Reflective of the high level of support that she receives from both her department chair and her colleagues, Sadie said, "I know that my department would be fine with that."

As her oldest child enters his last year of preschool, Greta is mindful of how teaching evening classes may begin to conflict with her children's school and extracurricular activities. Referring to the time conflicts likely to come, Greta said, "That has certainly been a thought of mine, for sure." Greta expressed hope that her department may consider scheduling afternoon classes in the future:

As faculty, we have had discussions about afternoon classes, maybe a 1:00 p.m. class and a 4:00 p.m. class. There are some faculty who are older who don't like to drive home in the dark at 10:00 p.m. when they are tired. So, I feel like there is a possibility for my future that I may be able to try teaching a 1:00 p.m. class. I don't feel locked in to always being away at night. I feel a flutter of hope out there.

### **Summary of Themes**

Although each participant's story of becoming a mother in the academy was unique, themes readily emerged regarding the shared experiences of the participants as mothers on the tenure track. The participants in this study were generally happy with their dual roles as mothers and as professors. They found satisfaction in their careers, and they loved their children. Perhaps more fortunate than some women in the academy, these participants benefitted from department chairs and departmental colleagues who supported work/life balance. Their careers

were also enabled by people outside the academy, including partners, grandparents, babysitters, daycare providers, parents of other children, and cleaning services.

Though the participants were generally content with their dual roles, achieving a sense of balance between career and family was not without personal and professional consequences and bumps in the road. Some of the participants deliberately chose to pursue their careers at less prestigious universities or considered forgoing opportunities for promotion to full professor; other participants considered having fewer children than they had wanted. Participants described challenges while on the tenure track such as hidden pregnancies and pregnancy discrimination, ignorance regarding maternity benefits, lack of institutional commitment to partner hires, scarce availability of childcare, limited availability of mentors, and struggles teaching evening classes.

The following chapter analyzes the five themes that emerged from this study, comparing the data from this study with existing literature on the experiences of women on the tenure track with children.

## CHAPTER 6

### **Analysis and Interpretation**

Much of the research literature previously published about mothers in academia contained findings suggesting that women who desire a balance between career and family might be wise to run fast and far from a tenure-track faculty career (Armenti, 2004; Finkel et al., 1994; Finkel & Olswang, 1996; Fogg, 2003; Harper et al., 2001; Mason & Goulden, 2002; Mason & Goulden, 2004). Extensive research by Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004, 2008), however, indicated that dual work and family roles can be both possible and fulfilling for academic women. Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2008) wrote, “The roles of faculty and mother are not impossible to reconcile, and there are many successful examples of women who do both well. We saw this as an important story to tell” (p. 180).

The findings of this study are supportive of Ward and Wolf-Wendel’s findings (2004, 2008). While the participants in this study faced challenges, they were all managing their dual roles well. As Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2008) suggested, this is indeed an important story to tell.

This chapter analyzes the five themes that emerged from this study—enjoying it all. . . with some compromises, departmental support, sharing 50/50 at home, outside support systems, and challenges—in light of the existing literature regarding the experiences of women on the tenure track with children.

### **Enjoying It All . . . With Some Compromises**

In their expansionist theory regarding work and family, Barnett and Hyde (2001) posited that multiple roles are generally beneficial for women. Supporting that theory, Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2008) found that women faculty spoke of the “joy” (p. 255) of parenting and the “joy” (p. 255) of teaching. Ward and Wolf-Wendel concluded, “Balancing multiple roles seems to offer these women a sense of perspective—tenure is important, but so are other parts of life, and vice versa” (p. 255).

As suggested by Barnett and Hyde (2001) and Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2008), participants in this study valued their professional successes. Participants at Prairie University emphasized rewarding interactions with their students. Sally specifically articulated the satisfaction of observing the moments when concepts “start clicking” for students; Greta and Kay described their excitement to be in their classrooms. Participants at City University emphasized their enjoyment of their research topics and the accolades derived from their research.

Like the women interviewed by Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2008), the participants in this study certainly spoke of their deep love for and commitment to their families. Participants repeatedly used the word “everything” to describe what it means to them to be a mother. Allie summed up the general feeling of the participants when she said, “I’d give up everything in my career for this experience as a mother for my son.”

Although women can and do effectively manage their dual roles as academics and as mothers, compromises are often necessary along the way. Multiple authors have noted the conscious professional and personal sacrifices made by women in the academy (Colbeck & Drago, 2005; Philipsen, 2008; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2008). Ward and Wolf-Wendel noted,

“Life is about choices, and choices have consequences, both negative and positive” (p. 254).

Philipsen and Ward and Wolf-Wendel found that women made deliberate choices about where they wanted to work, realizing that institutional priorities and institutional culture would affect their ability to balance career and family. Some women perceived the demanding tenure criteria at prestigious research universities as incompatible with the demands of parenting and chose to pursue careers at less prestigious institutions. Colbeck and Drago found that 25.5% of women faculty chose to have fewer children than they wanted in order to achieve professional success, and 12.7% delayed having a second child until after the receipt of tenure.

Weaver (2008), a tenure-track faculty member who has chosen to delay having a second child until after she is tenured, described the importance of making choices reflective of one’s most valued priorities:

We work with extreme dedication in order to balance academic and familial life. It is a delicate act, and one cannot do everything well all at the same time. We have to make choices, recognizing that there are costs and risks in what we do, what we postpone, and what we do not do. The key, I believe, is establishing the primacy of one’s priorities, organizing life around what one cannot live without, and granting oneself the time to attend to life’s goals accordingly. (p. 79)

Though the participants in this study were generally satisfied with their dual career and family roles, they noted the compromises which they had made in order to manage both roles. Allie, Kay, and Greta accepted faculty positions at less prestigious institutions and modified their research. Sadie is considering not pursuing opportunities for further promotion in order to spend more time with her daughter. Kay and Sadie are considering having smaller families than they would ideally prefer. Allie articulated how she explains the concept of compromises to the

talented young women that she mentors. According to Allie, “You can have it all. You just can’t have it all at once.”

### **Departmental Support**

Gappa, Austin, and Trice (2007) described the importance of respectful institutional cultures. According to Gappa et al., “Even though a culture of respect may be intangible, it is the core foundation from which to nurture other elements that enhance academic work and workplaces” (p. 147). Participants in this study benefitted from department chairs who laid the foundation for workplace environments that were respectful of the needs of faculty mothers. Participants were also supported by their colleagues who believed in the importance of work/life balance. Walden (2005), a visiting lecturer in the English department of a research university pinpointed the most critical element of a respectful departmental culture for faculty mothers. Walden shared, “One of the reasons that I like the department that I’m in is that it’s child friendly, which doesn’t mean that everyone has children, just that everyone is welcome to” (p. 81). Like Walden, the participants in this study did not work in departments in which everyone had children, but they did work in environments in which the fact that they had children was welcomed.

Participants in this study also benefitted from departmental cultures that permitted flexibility and autonomy. Philipsen (2008) and Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004) noted that academia is one of the few professional environments that does not put strict requirements on the time and location of employees. Faculty mothers have flexibility in their schedules and the organization of their days. According to Philipsen, “Parents are able to attend children’s special events, take time off without fearing for their jobs when children are sick, bring children to work, and bring work home” (p. 38). Recognizing such benefits, a woman on the tenure track with



children interviewed by Philipsen marveled at the flexibility of her career and wondered “how women with nonacademic jobs manage and do motherhood” (p. 71). Like the women interviewed by Philipsen and Ward and Wolf-Wendel, Sally expressed appreciation for the flexibility and autonomy which she enjoys with her academic career. According to Sally, “This job is the best of both worlds. I have a professional career that I am devoted to and that I enjoy. But I also have flexibility—especially with summers and holidays off—to be involved with my kids.”

### **Sharing 50/50 at Home**

According to the Families and Work Institute (2003), the dynamic of the second shift (Hochschild, 2003) is changing. Fathers are becoming more engaged in the lives of their children and are assisting with more of the household and childcare responsibilities traditionally taken care of by women. Early career women faculty interviewed by Philipsen (2008) identified the willingness of their husbands to assist with household and childcare responsibilities as an enabling factor for their careers. Meers and Strober (2009) described the benefits reaped by both men and women when couples share equally as breadwinners and as caregivers and recommended that couples redefine the meaning of the promise “I do” (p. 174). According to Meers and Strober, “‘I do’ is not merely the response you give before the ring goes on your finger. Ongoing negotiations about what ‘I do’ and ‘you do’ often determines the fate of a marriage” (p. 174).

Notably, all five participants in this study who were living with a partner described household and childcare responsibilities as equally shared. Each couple’s arrangement was unique, but partners worked as a team to meet the needs of their family. Acknowledging the

assistance of her partner, Emily shared, “Anytime anyone asks how I was able to get this done, I say that I could not have done it without the support of my husband.”

### **Outside Support Systems**

As noted by Philipsen (2008), some women faculty with children rely on other people, including family members, to assist with taking care of their families. Though partners served as a critical primary support system for Allie, Sadie, Greta, Sally, and Emily, secondary support systems also helped to reduce the burden of childcare and household responsibilities. Secondary support systems included grandparents, babysitters and daycare providers, parents of other children, and cleaning services. For Kay, Sarah, and Ayana—the participants who were not living with a partner—these other forms of support were essential.

### **Challenges**

Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004) labeled their findings regarding academic motherhood at research universities as “silver linings and dark clouds” (p. 241). According to Ward and Wolf-Wendel, “We were struck by how consistently our interviewees talked simultaneously about the positives and negatives of academic work from their perspectives as mothers of young children” (p. 241). Like the women interviewed by Ward and Wolf-Wendel, the participants in this study spoke of challenges which they had faced while on the tenure track with children. They described hidden pregnancies and pregnancy discrimination, ignorance regarding maternity benefits, lack of institutional commitment to partner hires, scarce availability of childcare, limited availability of mentors, and struggles teaching evening classes.

**Hidden pregnancies and pregnancy discrimination.** Though discrimination on the basis of pregnancy or childbirth is specifically prohibited under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as a result of the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 (Kaplin & Lee, 2006), Armenti

(2004) found that women continue to hide pregnancies during job interviews. Like some of the women interviewed by Armenti, neither Allie nor Kay disclosed that she was pregnant when she interviewed for a faculty position at Prairie University. Kay explained, “I was a little concerned that the pregnancy would be an issue.” Similarly, Allie shared, “I just didn’t think that was something to mention if I didn’t have to. I could hide it pretty well.”

**Information regarding maternity benefits.** Of the 173 nations around the world included in the Project on Global Working Families, Liberia, New Guinea, and Swaziland joined the United States as the only four nations offering no paid leave for mothers (Heymann et al., 2007). Under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993, about half of all women in the United States qualify for 12 weeks of unpaid leave during a 12-month period; the other half of women in the United States have no guaranteed maternity leave (Kaplin & Lee, 2006). To qualify for a guaranteed maternity leave under the FMLA, faculty must have been employed full-time by their college or university for a minimum of one year.

Although some colleges and universities have adopted family-friendly policies extending well beyond the federally mandated requirements (Gappa et al., 2007; Hollenshead, Sullivan, Smith, August, & Hamilton, 2005; Lester & Sallee, 2009), such policies are often not discussed or not considered useful (Finkel et al., 1994; Marcus, 2007; Mason, Goulden, & Wolfinger, 2006; Philipsen, 2008; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2008; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006). Wolf-Wendel and Ward (2006) noted, “There was universal concern about how using policies like parental leave would be perceived by colleagues and the ultimate effect taking a leave would have on tenure decisions” (p. 55).

Although Sadie expressed an appreciation for Rolling Hills University’s option to stop the tenure clock following the birth of a child, other participants were unaware of the maternity

leave options offered by their universities. None of the participants at Prairie University knew that their institution offered an option to stop the tenure clock. Kay and Greta were not familiar with the basic maternity benefits offered by the Family and Medical Leave Act. Sarah shared the story of a colleague who left City University largely because of its poor maternity benefits. Kay feared that requesting information about maternity benefits might have negative repercussions for her career. Kay shared, “I was afraid to ask what benefits might be available. I was afraid to ask about leave. I didn’t know what type of department chair we had. I did not know what the working environment was like.”

**Commitment to partner hires.** Wolf-Wendel, Twombly, and Rice (2003) described the “two-body problem” (p. 1) in academia. According to Wolf-Wendel et al., “When searching for a job or deciding whether to accept an offer, one partner has to consider the career options for the other” (p. 1). If both members of a partnership are academics and one or both are not established at a particular institution, they will face significant obstacles finding an institution that will hire both of them (Philipsen, 2008; Wolf-Wendel et al. 2003).

The stories of Allie and Sarah are indicative of the struggles of academic couples. Allie’s story has a happy ending. Prairie University hired both Allie and her husband, and their family is thriving. Sarah’s husband struggled to find meaningful work near City University. That struggle was detrimental to Sarah’s marriage and played a role in Sarah’s decision to leave City University. Sarah concluded, “I probably would not be leaving this university if it had originally done better by my husband.”

**Availability of childcare.** Finding dependable childcare is fundamental to the success of women in higher education with young children (Marshall, 2002). Without it, women with young children cannot do their jobs. As Sarah prepared to move to City University, she

struggled to find a childcare facility that had an opening for her son. Sarah recalled, “I was really, really not sure whether there was going to be any childcare available at all in any form in the entire city in time for me to start work.” Though she eventually found an excellent childcare center for her son, Sarah remembered thinking about the irony of her predicament. Sarah shared, “I remember thinking, ‘This is just really stupid. They have hired me to do this job. The base line starting condition for me to be able to do my work is to have childcare.’”

**Mentors.** Philipsen (2008) recognized talking to people in similar situations as an effective coping strategy for early career women faculty. Nadkarni (2008), a faculty member in the theater program at Le Moyne College and mother of a 15-month-old son, sobbed during a conference panel presentation on motherhood, theater, and academia. After Nadkarni regained her composure in the bathroom and returned to the presentation, a panelist made sure that she was okay and asked her to share her story. Nadkarni willingly shared her struggles as an academic mother on the brink of divorce:

She asked me for my story and I told everyone about having a baby and separating from my husband in the span of fifteen months. I told them about my struggles with academia, that I was the first junior professor in my department as well as the first female in a full-time teaching position, so when I got pregnant no one knew to tell the dean, so no one advised me to stop the tenure clock. I told them about directing two shows and teaching my regular load of classes while I was pregnant, attending graduation activities and starting labor, prematurely, the next day. I told them about my baby being delivered in the spring, and spending time in the neonatal intensive care unit, and having to devote an entire summer to making sure the baby was healthy, and that summer following me, academically, for the next five years. Once I realized I’d lost a summer, I asked my

department and my dean if I could stop the clock and was told that it was too late—and that if I pushed it, the tenure committee might think I was expecting special privileges for being a mother. (p. 68)

As the group talked for another hour, sharing stories and expressing fears, Nadkarni began to feel better. According to Nadkarni, “Somehow this group of women seemed to express such sincere understanding that I finally felt relief. Relief in being able to share my story. Relief in knowing that I was not alone” (p. 69).

Kay, Emily, and Greta expressed a desire for opportunities to seek feedback and suggestions from more experienced academic women with children or from fellow women on the tenure track with children. Kay expressed her desire for advice from senior colleagues. According to Kay, “I think that the emotional support is more important than the physical support. I needed a channel for gaining information about what was available and what was acceptable.” Greta has considered initiating a series of brown bag lunches for women to share common experiences. Greta explained, “I think it would be helpful to just get together to vent a little bit.”

### **Summary of Analysis**

Like the academic mothers interviewed by Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2008) and as posited by Barnett and Hyde (2001), the participants in this study were generally happy with their dual roles as academics and as mothers. Their ability to successfully manage career and family was enabled by supportive departmental cultures, partners who shared equally in childcare and household responsibilities, and outside support systems which also eased the burden of domestic responsibilities. Yet, like the “dark clouds” (p. 241) noted by Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2008), this study also identified challenges faced by women on the tenure track with children. Those

challenges included hidden pregnancies and pregnancy discrimination, ignorance regarding maternity benefits, lack of institutional commitment to partner hires, scarce availability of childcare, limited availability of mentors, and struggles teaching evening classes.

The following chapter provides a conclusion for the dissertation. The study is reviewed, and its limitations are noted. Recommendations are outlined for institutions of higher education, department chairs, and mothers aspiring to tenure. Finally, recommendations for future research are given.

## CHAPTER 7

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to understand the personal and professional experiences of women faculty on the tenure track with children. Despite 30 years of conversation about gender equity since the passage of Title IX as part of the Education Amendments of 1972, a snapshot of the academic ranks continues to show an inverse relationship between the percentage of women in a rank and the prestige of that rank (AAUP, 2004). As rank increases, the percentage of women at that rank decreases. Among full-time faculty in 2004, women accounted for 58% of instructors, 46% of assistant professors, 38% of associate professors, and 23% of full professors. According to West and Curtis (2006), the shortage of women at top academic ranks is due to factors above and beyond the historical exclusion of women from higher education. Discovering and understanding those factors is critical to the recruitment and retention of talented women faculty.

Utilizing a qualitative phenomenological approach, this study examined the unique stories of eight purposefully selected women faculty with children under the age of 18. Participants had completed at least their third year on the tenure track and were no more than three years post tenure. A face to face interview lasting 60 to 120 minutes was conducted with each participant. Participants were selected from three Midwestern universities: one master's university, one research university with high research activity, and one research university with



very high research activity. Participant demographics varied by institution, academic rank, academic field, relationship status, age of children, and ethnicity/nationality.

This chapter addresses the importance of the study, as well as acknowledges limitations of the study. A series of recommendations for institutions of higher education, department chairs, and mothers aspiring to tenure will be offered. This chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

### **Importance of this Study**

Unlike much of the research literature previously published about mothers in academia (Armenti, 2004; Finkel et al., 1994; Finkel & Olswang, 1996; Fogg, 2003; Harper et al., 2001; Mason & Goulden, 2002; Mason & Goulden, 2004), the findings of this study did not suggest that the roles of mother and professor are fiercely conflicting. Rather, like research by Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004, 2008), this study recognized challenges for mothers in academia, but emphasized that mothers can be both successful and happy in the academy.

When I embarked on this study, I anticipated hearing stories about women struggling to balance competing demands and regretting that they could not give their absolute best to either their careers or their children. I expected to hear the voices of academic women like Cognard-Black (2008), who, despite a thoroughly impressive resume, described herself as “a slipshod parent, a partial partner, an inconsistent friend, an absent family member” (p. 133). I thought that participants would have encountered settings clearly unwelcoming of children, like the finely decorated holiday party attended by McElreath (2008), or been advised, like McElreath, not to let motherhood interfere with their career. I guessed that participants would describe the time required by their children as a serious impediment to attaining tenure, as did more than 40% of women faculty surveyed by Finkel and Olswang (1996). I thought that women would

describe conscious attempts to time the births of their babies with quieter times in the academic calendar (Armenti, 2004). I thought that the stories I heard would be dark and gloomy.

To my own surprise and excitement, I quickly realized that the participants in this study were describing bright, vibrant lives. Did they face challenges? Yes. Those issues cannot be overlooked. Were the participants able to balance career and family alone? No. They received assistance from a long list of people including supportive department chairs, colleagues, partners, grandparents, babysitters, daycare providers, and parents of other children. But, more than anything, the participants in this study embraced their dual roles as academic professionals and as mothers and struggled to envision their lives any other way. Like Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2008), who found that women faculty with children described the “joy” (p. 255) of teaching and parenting, I learned that these women considered their lives to be complete and rich. Greta described herself as “living the American Dream every single day.” She explained, “I have a family. I have the best job there is.” This message is a critical one to share to encourage talented women who desire career and family to consider pursuing a career in academia.

### **Limitations**

This study was limited by time. I spent one to two hours formally interviewing each participant. During most interviews, participants shared photos of their children with me. More time spent with participants would have revealed an even deeper understanding of their work and family experiences. If time would have allowed for me to spend multiple days with participants, observing all of their experiences from the time they awoke to the time they went to bed, I could have watched these women in action as they balanced mothering with teaching, research, and service. More time with participants would have offered opportunities for me to witness participants interacting with their children, support systems, students, and colleagues.

Like in all qualitative research studies, this study's participant selection, data collection, and data analysis were dependent upon the researcher. Bracketing (Creswell, 2007), or Epoche (Moustakas, 1994), was used in an attempt to set aside my own experiences and consider the phenomenon under investigation from a new perspective. As suggested by Creswell, I included a description of my experience of the phenomenon of mothering as a graduate student in the introductory chapter of this dissertation. I also utilized member checking and a peer debriefer to assist with the analysis and interpretation of the research data.

### **Recommendations for Institutions of Higher Education**

The need for a family-friendly environment begins the moment that potential faculty first step foot on campus, literally. Colleges and universities must be mindful and respectful of maternal needs during hiring processes. Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, like Allie and Kay when they interviewed at Prairie University, may need special accommodations such as shortened days, limited time standing, scheduled breaks, or access to a private area for breastfeeding or pumping. Six months pregnant, Allie began bleeding near the end of her second day of interviews at Prairie University. When Allie returned home, her doctor said that the bleeding was most likely due to Allie being on her feet for an extended period of time that day. An abbreviated interview schedule or less time standing may have prevented Allie from bleeding, a symptom that can be very dangerous at that point during a pregnancy.

Colleges and universities should consider creating institutional policies that offer accommodations to families beyond those available through the Family and Medical Leave Act. Administrators should not create these policies alone, but rather engage the university's faculty in the development of the policies and seek input from faculty with young children or hoping to have children regarding what benefits would be most beneficial to them. Depending on the

needs of faculty at a particular institution and the institution's financial resources, options for consideration may include paid leaves to recover from childbirth, paid dependent care leave, unpaid dependent care leave, modified duties, part-time appointments, job-sharing appointments, and stopping the tenure clock. Sadie's experience at Rolling Hills University is indicative of the potential benefits of an institutional policy which allows new parents to stop the tenure clock. After institutional policies have been created, colleges and universities must ensure that they are extensively advertised and promoted to all faculty and supported by the culture of the institution. This final step is absolutely critical, as evidenced by the reality that none of the participants at Prairie University were aware that the institution offered a tenure clock stop option.

As resources allow, it is important for colleges and universities to support dual career hires and the creation of on-campus childcare centers. The experiences of Allie and Sarah demonstrate the importance of dual hires to retain talented faculty. Prairie University hired both Allie and her husband in tenure-track positions in the same department. The couple share adjoining offices which Allie referred to as a "godsend" for juggling childcare responsibilities. Allie and her husband are happy at Prairie University and plan to stay there. Conversely, Sarah's husband was never able to find meaningful work near City University, a struggle which chipped away at their marriage for a decade. Sarah resigned from City University and is hopeful that her husband will find satisfying employment near her new university and that they might reconcile their marriage. The importance of dual hires should be explained to the campus community by university administrators so that newly hired couples are not greeted by opposition from their colleagues.

### **Recommendations for Department Chairs**

According to Greta, “As faculty, your life can be hell or it can be blissful, depending on your dean and department chair.” This statement serves as a powerful reminder of the critical role of department chairs.

It is important that department chairs remember to celebrate babies! Focus on the ways that parenthood will enrich the teaching of faculty, rather than on the length of time that they will be away from the institution recovering from childbirth or caring for a newborn. Sanders (2008) described how parenthood makes faculty better teachers:

There is no better teacher training, in fact, than learning viscerally that every student is someone’s beloved child—or damn well ought to be. There is no more convincing introduction to the value of distinct learning styles, or intensive seminar in gender and development, or effective boot camp for training in efficiency and multitasking. (p. 248)

Participants in this study repeatedly expressed their appreciation for the ways in which their department chairs went above and beyond the norm to facilitate their family needs.

Because many women fear that punitive consequences will be associated with inquiring about or taking leaves related to maternity or dependent care (Finkel et al., 1994; Wolf-Wendel and Ward, 2006), department chairs should be proactive, rather than reactive, to assist faculty who are pregnant or planning to adopt a child. Rather than expecting the faculty member to approach them for assistance, department chairs should approach faculty members to ask what the department or the institution can do to help. Department chairs can assist the university in spreading the word to faculty about family benefits, rather than perpetuating the silence (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2008). Kay acknowledged her fear of asking about maternity benefits when she

was hired by Prairie University. Kay shared, “I was afraid to ask what benefits might be available. I was afraid to ask about leave. I didn’t know what type of department chair we had.”

To maintain a family friendly environment within a department, it is important for department chairs to be mindful of the needs of families when scheduling classes and meetings. To the greatest extent possible, department chairs should welcome faculty to offer input into their teaching schedules, and departmental meetings should be limited to traditional daytime working hours. Attendance at departmental social activities which are scheduled during evenings or weekends should be optional. Sarah described her appreciation of working within a departmental culture that did not allow for evening meetings. According to Sarah, “It absolutely goes without saying that there is no such thing as an evening meeting. It is not even discussed. It is completely off the table.”

### **Recommendations for Mothers Aspiring to Tenure**

The participants in this study serve as examples to encourage women that dual roles as mothers and as professors can be satisfying and fulfilling. If women would like to be a college or university professor, they should reach for that goal. According to Allie, “If you are good at something and you enjoy it, [having a career and family] is not going to be a problem. You’re going to be able to do it. . . . It’s totally a doable thing.” If academic women would like to have children, they should have them. Sadie enthused, “Absolutely have that baby! For me, having a baby has been the most wonderful thing that has happened.” That said, as advised by Allie, women need to be mindful of their biological clock and not delay childbearing too long.

Women desiring academic careers and family would be wise to choose their life partner carefully. The support of a partner committed to sharing household and childcare responsibilities evenly will facilitate a woman’s ability to juggle career and family. As advised by Meers and

Strober (2009), “Talk about who will do what as soon as you can—and make it a lifelong discussion” (p. 173). Emily, who shares household and childcare responsibilities evenly with her husband, said, “If it weren’t for my [partner], I would not be able to do this.”

Academic mothers should choose their boss carefully. Sadie advised, “Look for a university that is supportive of parents.” The same advice can be given regarding department chairs: look for a chair who promotes a work environment that is friendly to families. Remember Greta’s warning: “As faculty, your life can be hell or it can be blissful, depending on your dean and department chair.”

Women aspiring to tenure-track faculty positions must be mindful to have support systems in place. Support systems may take many forms. To the participants in this study, support systems included partners, grandparents, babysitters, daycare providers, parents of other children, and cleaning services.

Finally, women with children should remember to pace themselves on the tenure track. According to Sadie, “Know that there are options. You don’t have to be on the fast-track for tenure.” Balancing an academic career and motherhood may require some personal and professional compromises, but, as evidenced by the participants in this study, it can certainly be accomplished.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Participants in this study described personal and professional compromises that they made in order to balance career and family. Some participants at Prairie University deliberately chose not to pursue their careers at research universities, institutions which they viewed as having more demanding tenure criteria. Though the participants from Rolling Hills University and City University were generally doing well, Sadie was considering forgoing the path for

promotion to full professor. Sarah and Ayana both noted that their experience as mothers on the tenure track at City University was facilitated by the fact that their children were not babies when they started. Sarah's son was in preschool at the time of her hire, and Ayana's daughter was nearly a teenager. The stories of the participants in this study suggest that the experiences of mothers on the tenure track might be significantly different by institutional type. Further research is needed to understand such differences.

Although seven of the eight participants in this study were content and happy with their dual roles as professors and as mothers, Sadie was struggling with her desire to spend more time with her daughter. Sadie shared, "If I weren't dependent on the paycheck, I could very happily see myself staying at home." Further exploration is needed to understand the experiences of women like Sadie, women who are struggling with whether to continue working or stay at home. The stories of women who decide to leave careers in academia also need to be understood.

A longitudinal study with at least one participant, such as Sadie, would yield valuable data regarding whether women make different meaning of their experiences as academic mothers at different points during their career or at different stages of their children's lives. Will Sadie still be struggling when her daughter is a toddler or a preschooler, or will the overwhelming feeling of being a new mom slowly fade? Will Sadie be able to have a second child after the receipt of tenure, even though she will be 40 years old? How will having or not having a second child affect her feelings regarding her career? How will Sadie feel about her career as her daughter enters kindergarten? High school? College? As Sadie's daughter grows older, how will she describe her mother's career?

Future research is needed to explore the impact of the demographic characteristics of women on the tenure track with children. Specifically, further research is necessary to examine



the impact of institutional type, academic field, relationship status, age of children, and ethnicity/nationality on the experiences of women faculty. Similar future studies are also needed to focus on the intersectionality of race and motherhood or sexual orientation and motherhood.

Five of the eight participants in this study had either completed their Ph.D. before having a baby or were nearing completion of their dissertation at the time that their first child was born. The two participants who began Ph.D. programs after becoming a mother were granted tenure without earning the degree and have not yet completed their dissertations. Only one participant, Ayana, began and completed a Ph.D. program while raising a child. Future research on the experiences of women in graduate school with children is needed to understand what factors may hinder the ability of women with children to achieve the academic credentials typically required for a tenure-track career.

The presence of women faculty is greatest in instructor level positions (AAUP, 2004). Further study into the experiences of women in these positions is needed to understand if, and perhaps how, childrearing affected the decisions of women to pursue their careers in these positions rather than on the tenure track.

As indicated by the participants in this study who described a 50/50 division of household and childcare responsibilities with their partner, issues related to work/life balance are increasingly important to men. Further research is needed to understand the experiences of men on the tenure track with children and their needs for family-friendly work environments.

## **Conclusion**

As this dissertation draws to a close, it is my hope that the results found in this study may offer encouragement to women who desire both motherhood and academic careers. As evidenced by the participants in this study, dual roles as mothers and as professors are quite

possible. Might juggling the two roles require some personal and professional compromises?

Yes. Is there room for improvement in the effect of academic culture on the lives of women with children? Most definitely. But, is it possible for women in the academy to find a fulfilling balance between career and family if they are somewhat purposeful in the decisions that they make? As evidenced by the participants in this study, that answer is an exciting and resounding, “Yes!”

## References

- American Association of University Professors. (2004). *Faculty salary and faculty distribution fact sheet 2003-04*. Retrieved from <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/research/2003-04factsheet.htm>
- American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, & American Association of University Women Legal Advocacy Fund. (2004). *Tenure denied: Cases of sex discrimination in academia*. Washington, DC: Author.
- American Council on Education. (2007). *The American college president* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
- Armenti, C. (2004). May babies and posttenure babies: Maternal decisions of women professors. *The Review of Higher Education*, 27, 211-231.
- Barnett, R. C., & Baruch, G. K. (1985). Women's involvement in multiple roles and psychological distress. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 49, 135-145.
- Barnett, R. C., & Hyde, J. S. (2001). Women, men, work, and family: An expansionist theory. *American Psychologist*, 56, 781-796.
- Barnett, R. C., & Marshall, N. L. (1993). Men, family-role quality, job-role quality, and physical health. *Health Psychology*, 12, 48-55.
- Bolton, M. K. (2000). *The third shift: Managing hard choices in our careers, homes, and lives as women*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Buss, D. M. (1989). Sex differences in human mate preferences: Evolutionary hypotheses tested in 37 cultures. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 12, 1-49.
- Buss, D. M., & Kenrick, D. T. (1998). Evolutionary social psychology. In D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology* (4th ed., Vol. 2, pp. 982-1026). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.
- Butterfield, L. H. (Ed.). (1963). *Adams family correspondence* (Vol. II). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.
- Cognard-Black, J. (2008). Lip service. In E. Evans & C. Grant (Eds.), *Mama PhD: Women write about motherhood and academic life* (pp. 129-135). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University.
- Cohen, H. (2002, August 4). The baby bias. *New York Times* [Education Life supplement], p. 24.
- Colbeck, C. L. (2006). How female and male faculty with families manage work and personal roles. In S. J. Bracken, J. K. Allen, & D. R. Dean (Eds.), *The balancing act: Gendered perspectives in faculty roles and work lives* (pp. 31-50). Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Colbeck, C. L., & Drago, R. (2005). Accept, avoid, and resist: How faculty members respond to bias against caregiving and how departments can help. *Change*, 37(6), 10-17.
- Collay, M. (2002). Balancing work and family. In J. E. Cooper & D. D. Stevens (Eds.), *Tenure in the sacred grove: Issues and strategies for women and minority faculty* (pp. 89-106). Albany, NY: State University of New York.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 1-32). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Eisenmann, L. (2006). *Higher education for women in postwar America, 1945-1965*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University.
- Epstein, C. F. (1988). *Deceptive distinctions: Sex, gender, and the social order*. New Haven, CT: Yale University.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Evans, A., & Chun, E. B. (2007). *Are the walls really down? Behavioral and organizational barriers to faculty and staff diversity* (ASHE Higher Education Report, Vol. 33, No. 1). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Evans, C. (2006). *This is how we do it: The working mothers' manifesto*. New York, NY: Hudson Street.
- Families and Work Institute. (2003). *Generation and gender in the workplace*. Retrieved from <http://familiesandwork.org/site/research/reports/genandgender.pdf>
- Finkel, S. K., & Olswang, S. G. (1996). Child rearing as a career impediment to women assistant professors. *The Review of Higher Education*, 19, 123-139.
- Finkel, S. K., Olswang, S., & She, N. (1994). Childbirth, tenure, and promotion for women faculty. *The Review of Higher Education*, 17, 259-270.
- Fletcher, R. S. (1943). *A history of Oberlin College from its foundation through the Civil War*. Chicago, IL: R. R. Donnelly & Sons.
- Fogg, P. (2003, June 13). Family time: Why some women quit their coveted tenure-track jobs. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, pp. A10-A12.

- Freud, S. (1949). *Three essays on the theory of sexuality*. London, England: Imago.
- Gall, M. D., Gall, J. P., & Borg, W. R. (2003). *Educational research: An introduction* (7th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Gappa, J. M., Austin, A. E., & Trice, A. G. (2007). *Rethinking faculty work: Higher education's strategic imperative*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 191-215). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Harper, E. P., Baldwin, R. G., Gansneder, B. G., & Chronister, J. L. (2001). Full-time women faculty off the tenure track: Profile and practice. *The Review of Higher Education*, 24, 237-257.
- Hewlett, S. A. (2003). *Creating a life: What every woman needs to know about having a baby and a career* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Miramax.
- Heymann, J., Earle, A., & Hayes, J. (2007). *The work, family, and equity index: Where does the United States measure up?* Retrieved from <http://www.mcgill.ca/files/ihsp/WFEI2007FEB.pdf>
- Hochschild, A. R. (2003). *The second shift* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Penguin.
- Hollenshead, C. S., Sullivan, B., Smith, G. C., August, L., & Hamilton, S. (2005). Work/family policies in higher education: Survey data and case studies of policy implementation. In J. W. Curtis (Ed.), *The challenge of balancing faculty careers and family work* (pp. 41-65). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Hudock, A. (2006, May 26). Desiring books over babies. *Literary Mama*. Retrieved from <http://www.literarymama.com/columns/motheringintheivorytower/archives/000396.html>

- Hyde, J. S., & Plant, E. A. (1995). Magnitude of psychological gender differences: Another side to the story. *American Psychologist*, 50, 159-161.
- Kaplin, W. A., & Lee, B. A. (2006). *The law of higher education* (4th ed., Vol. 1). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Lester, J., & Sallee, M. (2009). *Establishing the family-friendly campus: Models for effective practice*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Marcus, J. (2007). Helping academics have families and tenure too: Universities discover their self-interest. *Change*, 39(2), 26-32.
- Marshall, S. (2002). *Women higher education administrators with children: Negotiating personal and professional lives* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3073936)
- Mason, M. A., & Goulden, M. (2002). Do babies matter? The effect of family formation on the lifelong career of academic men and women. *Academe*, 88(6), 21-27.
- Mason, M. A., & Goulden, M. (2004). Do babies matter (part II)? Closing the baby gap. *Academe*, 90(6), 11-15.
- Mason, M. A., Goulden, M., & Wolfinger, N. H. (2006). Babies matter: Pushing the gender equity revolution forward. In S. J. Bracken, J. K. Allen, & D. R. Dean (Eds.), *The balancing act: Gendered perspectives in faculty roles and work lives* (pp. 9-29). Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- McElreath, A. (2008). That mommy thing. In E. Evans & C. Grant (Eds.), *Mama PhD: Women write about motherhood and academic life* (pp. 89-92). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University.

- McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2001). *Research in education: A conceptual introduction* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Longman.
- Meers, S., & Strober, J. (2009). *Getting to 50/50: How working couples can have it all by sharing it all and why it's great for your marriage, your career, your kids, and you*. New York, NY: Bantam.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Nadkarni, A. D. (2008). Two boards and a passion. In E. Evans & C. Grant (Eds.), *Mama PhD: Women write about motherhood and academic life* (pp. 66-71). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2006). *Digest for education statistics*. Retrieved from [http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2007/2007017\\_3a.pdf](http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2007/2007017_3a.pdf)
- Orenstein, P. (2000). *Flux: Women on sex, work, love, kids, and life in a half-changed world*. New York, NY: Anchor Books.
- Parsons, T. (1949). The social structure of the family. In R. N. Anshen (Ed.), *The family: Its function and destiny* (pp. 241-274). New York, NY: Harper & Brothers.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Philipsen, M. I. (2008). *Challenges of the faculty career for women: Success and sacrifice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Rudolph, F. (1990). *The American college and university: A history*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia.



- Sachs, W. (2005). *How she really does it: Secrets of successful stay-at-work moms*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo.
- Sanders, J. (2008). In dreams begin possibilities—or, anybody have time for a change? In E. Evans & C. Grant (Eds.), *Mama PhD: Women write about motherhood and academic life* (pp. 247-250). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University.
- Simons, R. W. (1992). Parental role strains, salience of parental identity and gender differences in psychological distress. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 33, 25-35.
- Solomon, B. M. (1985). *In the company of educated women*. New Haven, CT: Yale.
- Thoits, P. A. (1992). Identity structures and psychological well-being: Gender and marital status comparisons. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 55, 236-256.
- Toth, E. (1997). *Ms. Mentor's impeccable advice for women in academia*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania.
- Trivers, R. L. (1972). Parental investment and sexual selection. In B. Campbell (Ed.), *Sexual selection and the descent of man* (pp. 136-179). Chicago, IL: Aldine.
- United States Census Bureau. (2008). *The 2008 statistical abstract: The national data book*. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/tables/08s0580.pdf>
- Walden, G. (2005). Hiding the baby. In R. H. Bassett (Ed.), *Parenting and professing: Balancing family work with an academic career* (pp. 78-81). Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University.
- Ward, K., & Wolf-Wendel, L. (2004). Academic motherhood: Managing complex roles in research universities. *The Review of Higher Education*, 27, 233-257.
- Ward, K., & Wolf-Wendel, L. (2008). Choice and discourse in faculty careers: Feminist perspectives on work and family. In J. Glazer-Raymo (Ed.), *Unfinished agendas* (pp. 253-272). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University.

- Weaver, N. K. (2008). Coming to terms at full term. In E. Evans & C. Grant (Eds.), *Mama PhD: Women write about motherhood and academic life* (pp. 77-79). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University.
- Weiss, R. S. (1994). *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Wenniger, M. D., & Conroy, M. H. (Eds.). (2001). *Gender equity or bust!* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- West, M. S., & Curtis, J. W. (2006). *AAUP faculty gender equity indicators 2006*. Retrieved from <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/research/geneq2006.htm>
- Wethington, E., & Kessler, R. C. (1989). Employment, parental responsibility, and psychological distress: A longitudinal study of married women. *Journal of Family Issues*, 10, 527-546.
- Wolf-Wendel, L., Twombly, S. B., & Rice, S. (2003). *The two-body problem: Dual-career-couple hiring practices in higher education*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University.
- Wolf-Wendel, L., & Ward, K. (2006). Faculty work and family life: Policy perspectives from different institutional types. In S. J. Bracken, J. K. Allen, & D. R. Dean (Eds.), *The balancing act: Gendered perspectives in faculty roles and work lives* (pp. 51-72). Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Woody, T. (1966). *A history of women's education in the United States* (Vol. 2). New York, NY: Octagon.
- Zelditch, M. (1955). Role differentiation in the nuclear family: A comparative study. In T. Parsons & R. F. Bales (Eds.), *Family, socialization and interaction process* (pp. 307-351). Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

## **Appendix A: Informed Consent Document**

### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

#### **Women Assistant Professors with Children: Managing Career and Family Study**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Jennifer Sipes, who is a doctoral student from the Department of Educational Leadership, Administration, and Foundations at Indiana State University. Ms. Sipes is conducting this study for her doctoral dissertation. Dr. Mary Howard-Hamilton is her faculty sponsor for this project.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are either an assistant professor or a recently tenured associate professor and the mother of a child under the age of 18. Eight women will be participating in this study.

#### **• PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to understand the personal and professional experiences of women faculty on the tenure track with children. It is critical that colleges and universities understand and appreciate these experiences in order to recruit and retain talented women faculty.

#### **• PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

1. You will be asked to participate in a face to face interview with the researcher. The interview will last 60 to 120 minutes.
2. The interview will be digitally recorded by the researcher.
3. You will be asked to review a transcript of your interview and clarify understanding of your experiences.

#### **• POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with this study other than what is normally associated with telling someone you do not know about your experiences balancing a career in academia and family.

## • **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

The benefit you may receive from this study is minimal, although the knowledge gained from this study may contribute to a better understanding of the experiences and needs of women on the tenure track with children.

## • **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of assigning a pseudonym to each participant. Participants may choose their own pseudonym; if participants prefer, the researcher will select a pseudonym for them. These pseudonyms will be used to identify participants throughout the transcripts, the thematic coding of the transcripts, and the dissertation.

Digital recordings of the interviews will be initially kept on the researcher's digital voice recorder and then transcribed into a computer file on the researcher's personal computer. Only the researcher and her faculty sponsor will have access to the recordings on the digital voice recorder. The researcher, her faculty sponsor, and a peer debriefer will have access to the interview transcripts. Additionally, each participant will be provided with a copy of her own transcript for member checking. As required by the Indiana State University Institutional Review Board, the computer file of interview transcripts will be retained for three years following the completion of the dissertation. After three years, paper records will be shredded and electronic records will be erased.

## • **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether or not to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

## • **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact

Ms. Jennifer Sipes  
Principal Investigator  
Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs  
Old Main, Room 1211  
Eastern Illinois University  
Charleston, IL 61920  
217-581-3221  
jlsipes@eiu.edu

Dr. Mary Howard-Hamilton  
Professor  
Department of Educational Leadership, Administration, and Foundations  
College of Education, Room 1216  
Indiana State University  
Terre Haute, IN 47809  
(812)237-2907  
mhowham@indstate.edu

## • RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Indiana State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) by mail at Indiana State University, Office of Sponsored Programs, Terre Haute, IN 47809, by phone at (812) 237-8217, or e-mail the IRB at [irb@indstate.edu](mailto:irb@indstate.edu). You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with ISU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

---

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

---

### **Appendix B: Interview Protocol**

1. What has led you to choose a career as a university professor?
  - At what point in life did you know that this was the career that you wanted to pursue?
  - What drew you to this profession?
  - Did you hold professional positions outside of higher education earlier in your life?
2. What educational path has led you to this point in your career?
  - What fields did you study for your bachelor's, master's, and Ph.D. degrees?
  - At what point during your education did you (if applicable) get married or find your partner? Give birth to or adopt your first child?
  - Was the timing of the birth/adoption of your children "planned"? Why or why not?
3. How did motherhood affect your educational or career aspirations?
  - What were your aspirations before motherhood?
  - What are your aspirations since motherhood?
  - If your aspirations changed, why do you think they changed? How do you feel about those changes?
  - If your aspirations did not change, how do you think that you were able to maintain the same goals?
4. From your personal experience, what is it like to be a mom on the tenure track?
  - Regarding teaching, research, and service. . . What is your teaching load like? How much/what types of research do you do? In what types of service do you participate?
  - How does motherhood affect your teaching, research, and service?
  - What emotions come to mind when you think of raising children during the six years given to earn tenure?
  - How does motherhood affect your understanding of your students? How does teaching affect your understanding of your children?
5. What does the university do/provide that is most helpful for you as a mother pursuing tenure?
  - To what extent is FMLA leave helpful?
  - To what extent is stopping the tenure clock for one year upon the birth or adoption of a child helpful?
6. What could the university do/provide that would improve your experience as a mother pursuing tenure?
  - To what extent would part-time tenure-track positions be helpful?

- To what extent would an on-campus childcare center be helpful?
  - Do you have suggestions for reformulating the tenure process so that the tenure-track years would not coincide so directly with childbearing/childrearing years?
7. How would you describe the climate of the university for you as a mother on the tenure track?
- Do you feel that your job performance is under greater, less, or the same scrutiny because you are a mother?
  - Do you feel that your decision to be a mother is respected by your colleagues? By the administration?
  - Are mentors readily available for you, particularly mentors who are tenured women with children?
8. What is essential to managing a family while pursuing tenure?
- What is essential at home?
  - What is essential within your department?
  - What is essential within the university at large?
9. What does your career as a professor mean to you?
10. What does motherhood mean to you?